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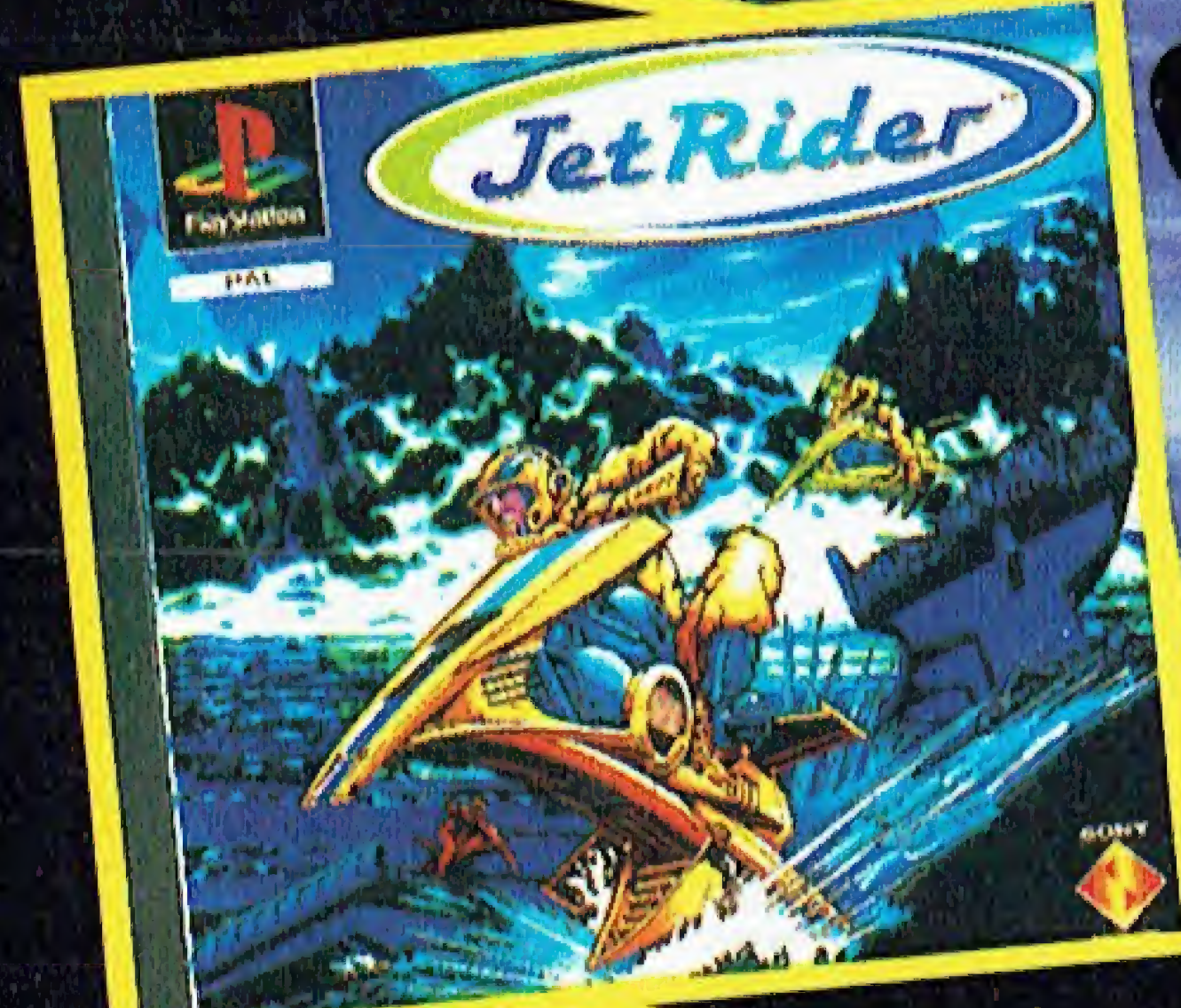
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Permit Nos: Coolboarders: NSW TC97/0259, ACT TP96/1699, issued under the Lotteries Act 1964, SA T4332, NT97/0098. Twisted Metal 2: NSW TC97/00349, ACT TP96/1753, issued under the Lotteries Act 1964, SA T4373 NT97/0164. Jet Rider: NSW TC97/00348, ACT TP96/1755, issued under the Lotteries Act 1964, SA T4374, NT97/0165. 2Xtreme: NSW TC97/00347, ACT TP96/1754, issued under the Lotteries Act 1964, SA T4375, NT97/0166. CLASSIFICATIONS ARE: Coolboarders-G, Twisted Metal 2-GB+ Low Level Animated Violence, Jet Rider-G, 2Xtreme-GB+ Low Level Animated Violence.



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Distribution: NDD - 02 9353 9911

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This issue's complimentary CD contains no less than five exclusive demos of the latest and upcoming PlayStation titles.

Cool Boarders

Non-playable demo

PUBLISHER: Sony RELEASE: Out now

Cool Boarders was reviewed in our last issue where it scored a credible 7 out of 10. This is one of the most often played games in the office and word has just reached us that work on a sequel is under way.

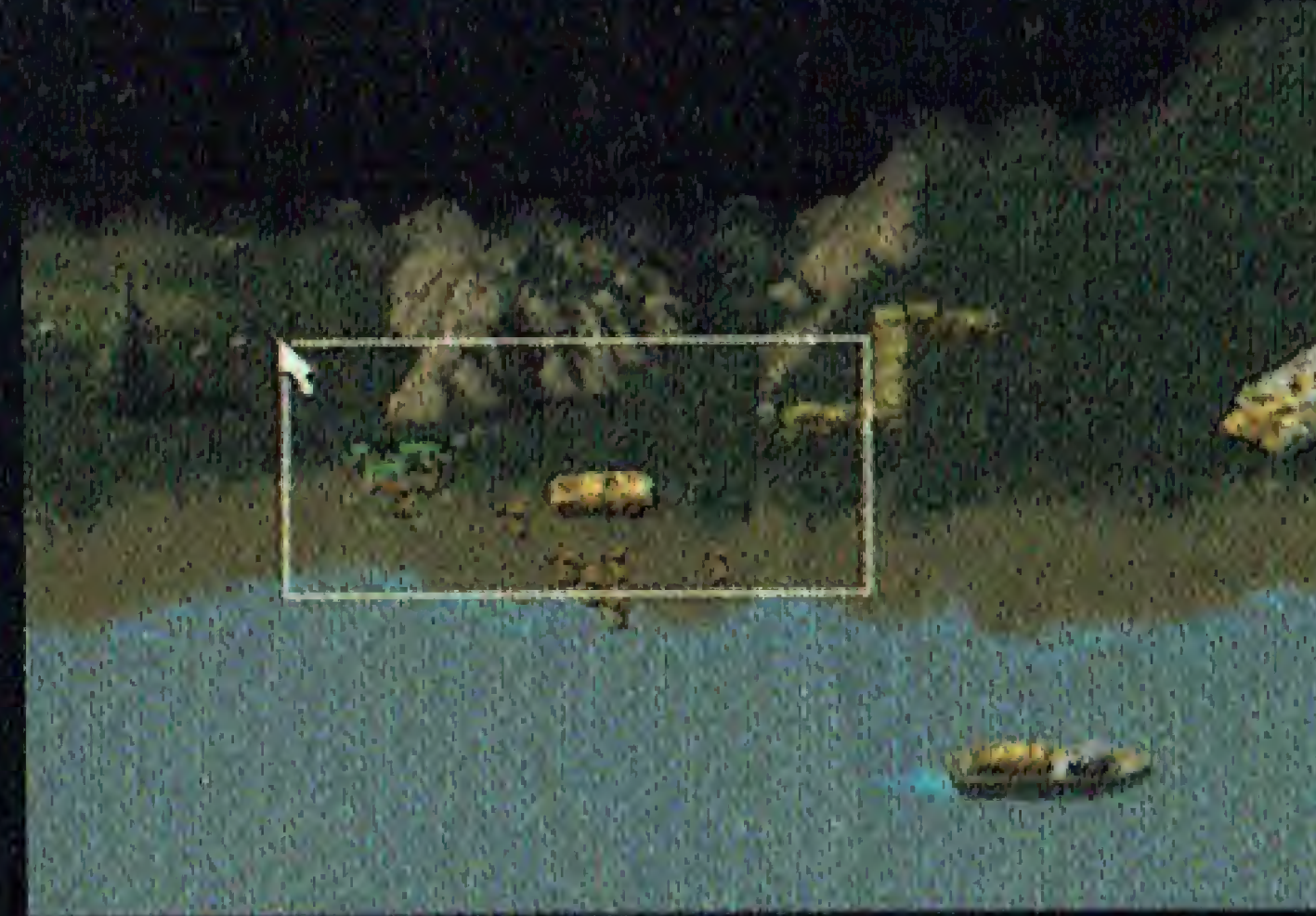


Command & Conquer

Playable demo

PUBLISHER: Virgin Int. RELEASE: Out now

The game that took the PC world by storm is now available on the PlayStation. Here's your chance to find out what all the fuss is about.



Trash It

Playable demo

PUBLISHER: Warner Int. RELEASE: TBA

As the title suggests, your mission in this side-scrolling platform game is to trash everything you come across. You're armed with hefty a sledge hammer so don't stop until the city's flat! Hard hat included.



Adidas Power Soccer Int.

Playable demo

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis RELEASE: April

This is the '97 upgrade of one of the better soccer games to come out last year. While it may appear the same as its predecessor at first glance, a wealth of improvements have been made to the gameplay.



Robotron X

Playable demo

PUBLISHER: GT Int. RELEASE: Out now

This game arms you with a gun and puts you in a room with thousands of psychotic droids to use it upon. Hint: Don't take your fingers off the fire button!



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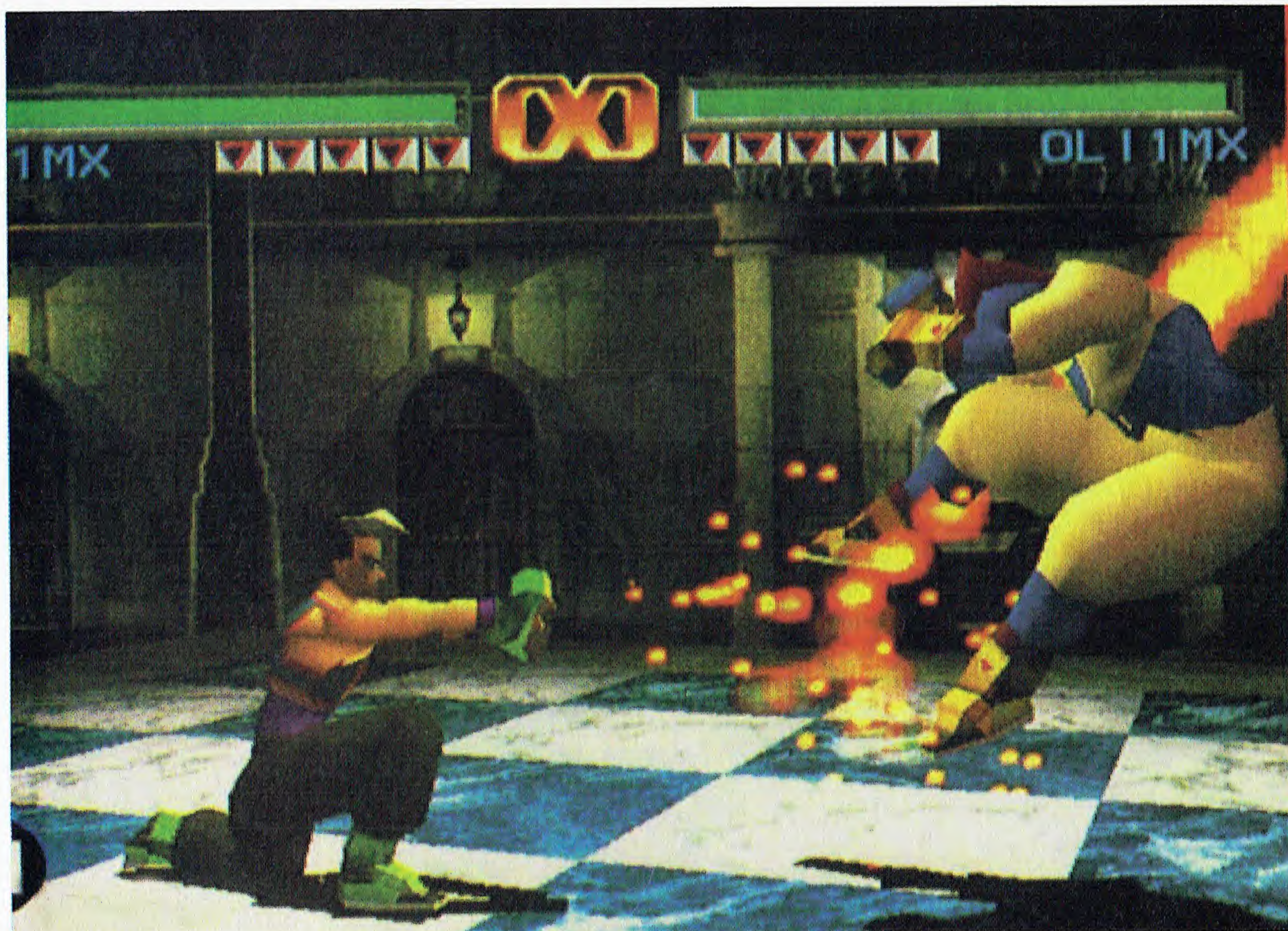


Tobal Number Two

Sorry we're late! This issue was due to hit the streets at the end of March, but Easter time delays (we're blaming the Easter Bunny) resulted in the on-sale date being pushed back a few weeks. We apologise for the inconvenience in not getting your favourite games mag out on time, but hey, good things come to those who wait.

Sony has announced that PlayStation software is officially being launched into the rental market. PSX sample CDs have been so well received, that Sony believes rental of the PlayStation games will only add to the fun for us PSX gamers. Video Games Enterprises and Capital Games Centre have been appointed as the exclusive agents for distribution of PlayStation software to the rental market, so look for the latest in PlayStation games coming soon to a video store near you!

These are the games we've been spending the most time playing over the past couple of months, in no particular order: *Tobal No. 1*, *Wipeout 2097*, *NBA Live '97*, *Twisted Metal World Tour*, *Cool Boarders*, *Porsche Challenge*, *Soul Blade*, *Jet Rider*, *Rage Racer* and *Final Fantasy VII*. And these are the games we're most looking forward to: *Final Fantasy VII*, *Bushido Blade*, *Life Force Tenka*, *Bushido Blade*, *Spider* and *MDK*. Oh, and did we mention *Bushido Blade*?



We were thrilled to bits when we discovered that work on a sequel to our favourite fighting game is already well under way and, from what we've seen so far, *Tobal 2* is looking very tasty, indeed!

The fighters have a lot more detail to them, as do the backgrounds, but the main difference is that the game now has special moves in the form of fireballs and the like.

How this will affect the realism of the combat remains to be seen, but with the fighting being in a true 3D environment, battles could get quite interesting.

The Quest mode has received a major overhaul and appears to be a full game in its own right, with a huge map that covers desert areas, mountainous regions and seaside locations. Hopefully

the somewhat stiff movement will be freed up for this part of the game.

Another interesting aspect of the game is that it's believed to take advantage of Sony's new analog feedback pad. This could open up combat strategies never before thought possible with the standard controller. We'll keep you informed as this game gets closer to completion.

Tekken on the Big Screen



The fully rendered intros to games such as *Tekken 2* and *Soul Blade* left many gamers slack jawed and wishing for more, and now it seems that realisation of such wishes may not be far off. A new deal cemented by three big entertainment companies means we're going to see full length feature films which are totally computer generated! Realising that there isn't much competition in the realm of the computer-generated (CG) special effects industry, Sony Computer Entertainment, Namco Limited and Polygon Pictures (responsible for the effects in *Babe*) have formed an entertainment company named Dream Pictures Studio to produce feature length fully computer animated movies. While one of the aims is to be able to produce CG special effects for feature

films, Dream Pictures has another idea up their sleeve. One of their first projects will be a totally CG film based on *Tekken*! Yes, we had to calm down a bit too. Just seeing what some game developers can pull off on the PlayStation is enough to get the jaws dropping, but just imagining a whole film dedicated to CG animation is enough to get the heart racing! With Namco part of the company, we're likely to see more films based on games, depending of course on the success of the first few films. Apparently, after showing a short two minute pilot film co-produced by Polygon Pictures, Sony had no hesitation in signing on the dotted line. We're sure that we'll be equally impressed when the film is released, though this probably won't happen for a while.

WIN STAR WARS GAMES & AN OFFICIAL LUCAS ARTS JACKET!

*The world has gone Star Wars mad
and we have too!*

This madness has extended to Metro Games, who has offered six star-struck readers the chance to win copies of both new **Star Wars** games for the PlayStation, **Dark Forces** and **Rebel Assault II**. One of these lucky winners will also win an official **Lucas Arts** denim jacket!



Dark Forces



Rebel Assault 2

TO WIN, use your Jedi powers to deduce the answers to the following questions. If your Jedi powers are weak, read the review of **Dark Forces** in this issue and you'll soon find the answers.

May the Force be with you!

1. What is the name of the character you play in **Dark Forces**?
2. What is the new **Imperial** weapon you've been sent to uncover?

Write the answers down on the back of an envelope and send them to the following address via the next **Tyderium Shuttle**.

I'd like to get into her jacket comp

PlayStation Magazine

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Conditions of entry: 1. This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand. 2. Entries must be received by May 31, 1997. 3. Employees of Next Publishing and Playcorp may not enter. 4. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence may be entered into.



Guns, Grooves and Gas Guzzlin'

Imagine the car chase scenes from *Mad Max 2* or *Cherry 2000*, but with characters who look like they've stepped out of the Beastie Boys' Sabotage video clip. That's about the best description we could come up with for Activision's *Interstate '76*, a new PC game destined for the PlayStation later this year. In a nutshell, you drive around in bad-ass car shooting bad-ass gangsters and everybody has funky hair styles. The game engine is similar to that of *MechWarrior 2* and if Activision puts as much effort into the PSX version of *Interstate '76* as it did with *Mech 2*, the game will indeed be very, very funky. We'll have to wait until October to find out.



Wieners!

Subscription winners: Adam Taylor of Kingaroy, Qld and Russell Case of Irymple, Victoria.

MechWarrior Mayhem comp: George Hague of Bolton Point, NSW; Jouni Jarvinen of Bathurst, NSW; Anthony Young of Willagee, WA; Mark Hobsoy of Dubbo, NSW; A. Nesbitt of South Hobart, Tas; Ben Karma of Gympie, Qld.

Make My Day comp: Thomas Holmes of Hornsby, NSW; Mather Bishop of Balmoral, NSW. Warner Interactive comp: Wayan Kent of Clagiraba, Qld.

Commie Killing Copter comp: Neville Zrim of Seven Hills, NSW; Shari Alderson of Stuart Park, NT; Nathan Haturini of Ballajura, WA; Brook Lynch of Kelso, NSW; Boz Yates of Nth Stradbroke Island; Jay White of St Peters, SA.

Monster Virgin comp: 1st - Nathan Young of Watsonia, Vic; 2nd - Matthew Jachmann of Loxton, SA. Crash Comp:

Sony Big TV comp: Matthew L. of Bondi, NSW.

Bloodbath on the boil



The much anticipated sequel to one of the biggest selling PlayStation titles ever has been delayed as a result of its developer, Capcom, wanting to make a number of further improvements. *Resident Evil 2* is now not expected to be available until late in the year, hopefully in time for Christmas.

The gameplay is very much in the same style as its predecessor. However, the main changes include: twice the number of enemies on-screen at the same time; a greater difference in the way the plot unfolds for each character; actions have a permanent effect for the rest of the game (doors stay locked, clothes get covered in blood, etc.); and this results in greater interactivity with the surroundings.

Press Release roundup

From the first of March this year the PlayStation has been available for a recommended retail price of \$299, so all those people who were thinking of buying one now have no excuse not to. In keeping with this cut, Sony has also announced a new range of budget priced software entitled the Platinum Collection. Available for only \$49.95, gamers can get their hands on some very cool titles (older ones of course). The Platinum Range currently consists of: *Wipeout*, *Ridge Racer*, *Tekken*, *Destruction Derby*, *Air Combat* and *Battle Arena Toshinden*.

Michael Ephraim, General Manager of Sony Computer Entertainment Australia had this to say: "The introduction of the Platinum Range of greatest hits titles will enable families to

build a library of classic PlayStation hits at a price closer to that of audio CDs". All other titles, including new releases, will retail between \$69.95 to \$89.95.

Sony also recently released some details of the gaming habits of PlayStation users and other odd bits of PlayStation trivia. Firstly, the installed user base of PlayStation consoles has hit 12 million, with over 90 million games sold. In a market-by-market run down it was revealed that:

- The Japanese market is the largest, with five million consoles sold, at an average of eight games per user. Forty million games have been sold.
- The US market has a user base of 3.3 million consoles.
- Europeans own 2.2 million consoles,

with an average of six games per owner.

- Australians own 100,000 PSX consoles and we have a library of about five games per user on average.

From these figures, it's clear to see that our cousins in Japan are the most fanatical gamers of the lot, with the highest number of games owned per console. The Europeans are more down to earth, with an average of six titles per user. What does that say about us as gamers, with the lowest average of games per console? Are we more fastidious? Are our standards higher? This could be in part explained by the cheaper price of games and systems overseas, but with the price of the PSX and games taking a tumble over here, this is set to change. Write in and let us know what you think!

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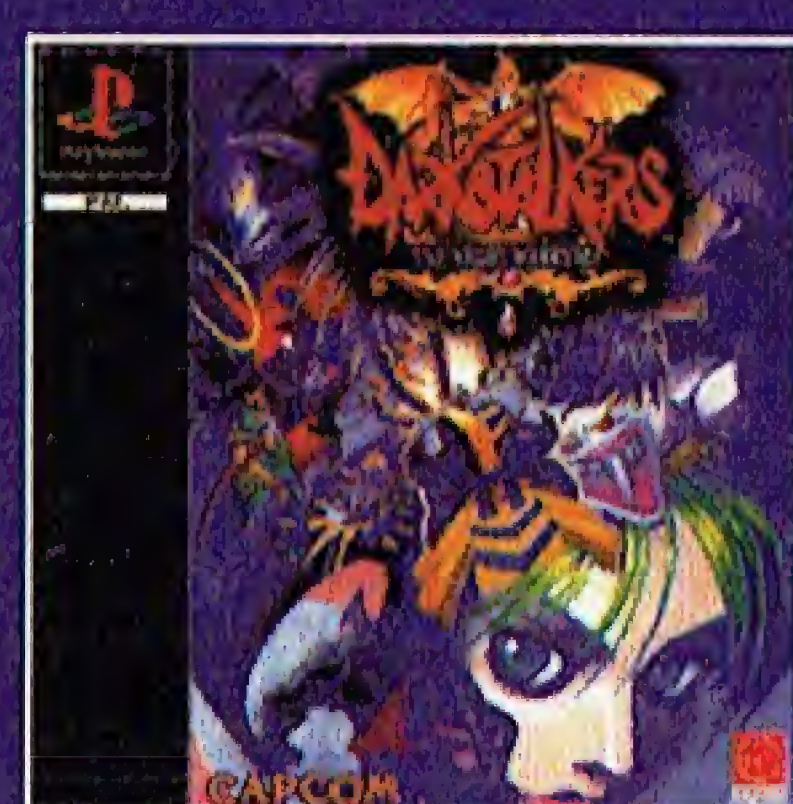
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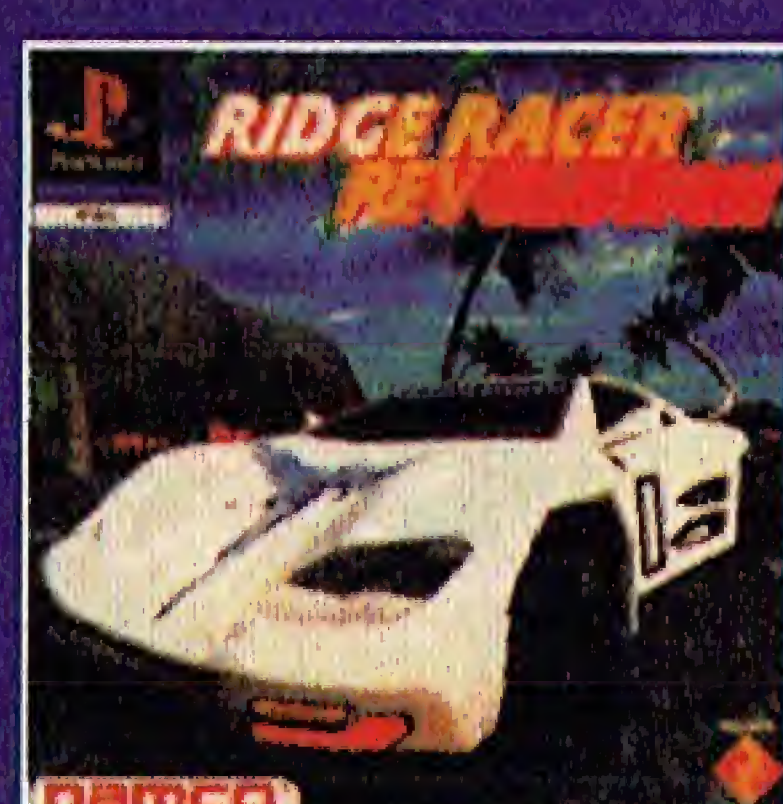
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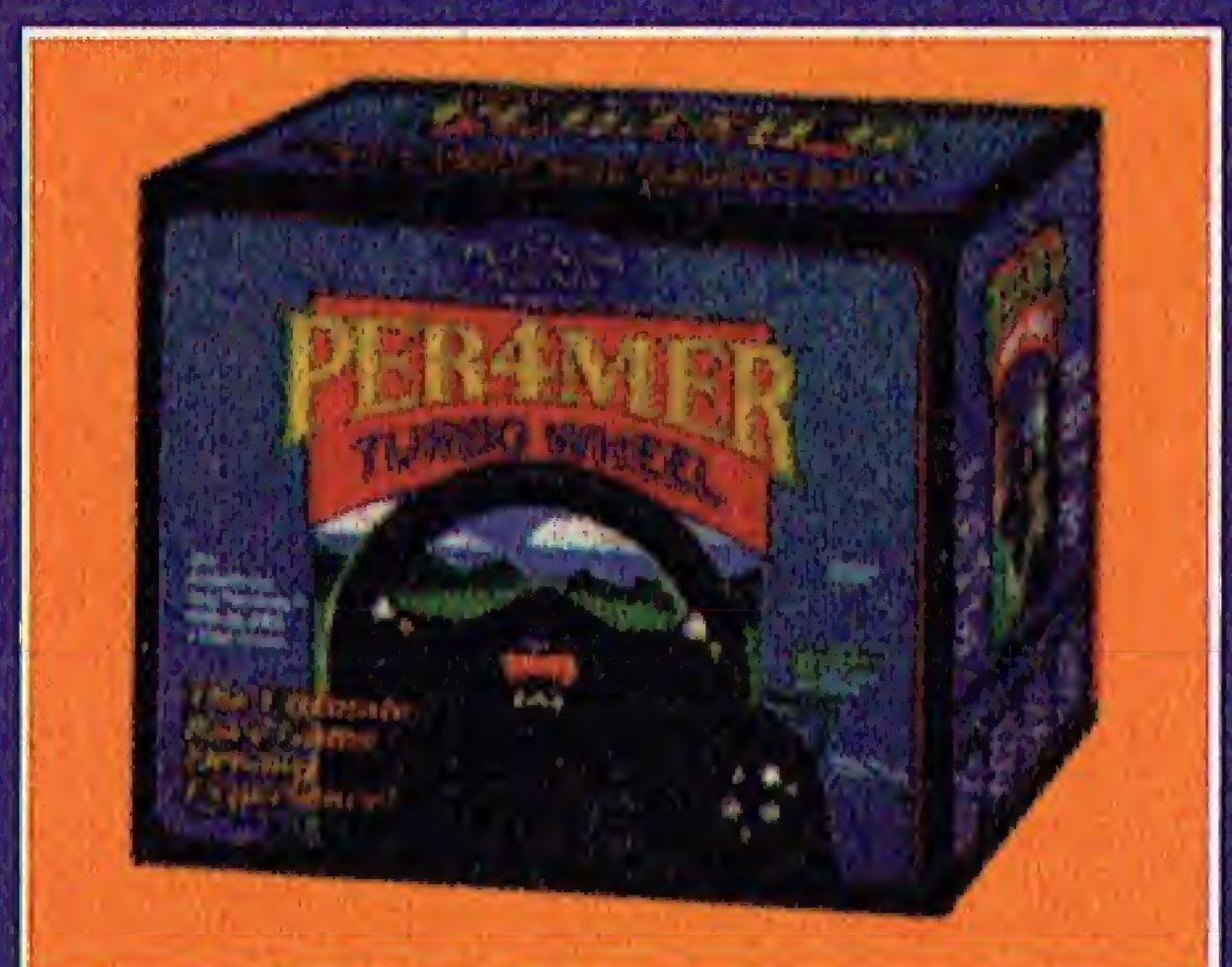
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Games we couldn't fit in

Due to the deadlines involved in producing a magazine (this issue was put together back in February), there were a number of games which just didn't turn up in time for us to review.

Micro Machines V3



Long time gamers may remember *Micro Machines* from its days on the NES. It was (and still is) one of the most enjoyable top-down racing games ever played and this version offers more of the same but with 3D graphics.

Life Force Tenka



We previewed this Psygnosis title last issue and were quite disappointed that it didn't turn up in time, as we were really looking forward to playing it for ourselves. *Tenka* is a *Doom*-style game, that's been developed specifically for the PlayStation and, as a result, it looks superb. The gameplay is more varied than most games of this sort, with players required to do more than just shoot their way through the levels. *Tenka* is due out

Lick my gamy ungula



Here's the only pic we could find of the forthcoming *Aeon Flux* game. Is this part of the actual game or a pre-rendered sequence? At this stage we don't know, as details are scarce to say the least, but Monican spies in our employment are gathering information as you read this.

any day now and if you like this sort of game you'd be a fool not to check it out.



2Xtreme

We've actually had a copy of this floating around the office for some time, but to be honest there were better games to fill the mag with. It's *Crap* with a capital C, though fans of the first game (and there were lots of them if you believe the sales figures spouted by Sony) may find some sort of masochistic pleasure in it. Extremely dull and boring, and nobody wanted to review it anyway.

Sentient



Another Psygnosis title which missed the boat, *Sentient* is an RPG with a style very different to those you may have come across before. At first glance it looks like a *Doom*-style game, but you don't go around shooting people, rather you have

to talk to them. *Sentient* has one of the most intricate interfaces yet seen and allows you to have proper conversations with the other characters. Its non-linear gameplay may seem confusing at first, but once you understand how it works you'll be drawn into its compelling storyline which has more twists than a pack of those cheese flavoured snacks (the one's that life is pretty straight without).

Megaman X3

We reviewed this game in our first issue, but its release date slipped back until recently. For those who missed it, *Megaman X3* is a classic side-scrolling platform game. It's classic in the sense that its appearance and gameplay is very similar to all those platform games of the Super NES and Megadrive. Not bad if you like that sort of thing, but very tough. **6/10**

Suikoden



Those who've been bemoaning the lack of RPGs on the PlayStation may be thrilled to see this Japanese title turn up, but if you've been weaned on the likes of *The Secret Of Mana* and *Zelda*, you may be a little disappointed. It's a bit too linear for our liking, but proves to be quite engrossing - for a while at least.

Grey, Black, Blue and White?

Last issue we announced the arrival of the Black PlayStation - a machine which allows budding programmers to develop their own games. Now there's a new one to add to the list. Sony are launching a White PlayStation into the Asian market. What's so special about this one then? Well, apart from being white, the internal specifications are slightly different. Using an MPEG chipset worked on by compression specialists Xing, the White PSX will allow the user to play any MPEG CD. This turns the humble games machine into a MPEG CD viewer and games machine in one, an idea that Sony admits it would be an injustice to ignore. The MPEG market in Asia is HUGE - MPEG CDs can contain

feature films and anime - two of the biggest pastimes of Asian users. Changes also include new security measures to prevent play of pirated games on the machine, a particular concern in the Asian market. Packaged with matching white controllers, the White PSX should retail at around US\$279. As MPEG has never really taken off over here (DVD is around the corner), it's highly unlikely that we'll see a local release of the machine.

Oh, and the blue ones? They're the debugging stations used by programmers and us to play pre-release alpha and beta versions of games. And no, you can't get one for yourself, Sony only sells them to industry types.

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WIN THE ULTIMATE B

IF FIGHTING GAMES ARE YOUR FORTE, YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS OUT ON THIS COMPETITION!

Our pugilistic pals at Sony have given us EIGHT Beat 'Em Up Bundles to give away. Each bundle consists of:

- One Namco Arcade Stick
- One copy of Soul Blade
- One copy of Tobal No.1 & stickers



EAT 'EM UP BUNDLE!



To win, simply tell us
the name's of three fighters
from Soul Blade or Tobal No.1.

Write your answers on the back of an envelope and send it to:
BREAK MY FINGERS COMP
PlayStation Magazine
P.O. Box 634, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012

Conditions of entry: 1. This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand. 2. Entries must be received by May 31, 1997. 3. Employees of Next Publishing and Sony Computer Entertainment may not enter. 4. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence may be entered into.



Joy Wonders

You've got your PlayStation and you've got plenty of games, but what other toys can you get to go with them? Here's a rundown on some of the after market accessories and gadgets available and what they can be used for.

Namco Arcade Stick

By: **Namco**

Price: **\$99.95**

Feel: ★★★★★

Design: ★★★★★

Construction: ★★★★★

Software Support: **All, especially fighting games**

Sony's newest entry in the big stick stakes is the Namco Arcade Stick. One of the best things about this stick is its simplicity in both design and function. Usually, alternate controllers are covered with masses of turbo buttons you never use and slow motion functions which don't really work. The Namco Arcade Stick though, consists only of the regular buttons on a nice heavy duty base. The buttons themselves are very tasty and more like arcade buttons than most, but we don't understand why six of the eight buttons are large while the L1 and L2 buttons are so small. Sure, you rarely need all eight buttons, but when you do, it's usually for a fighting game which is what these sticks are all about. Whilst not as sloppy as the Ascii stick, the joystick itself on this unit has a bit too much movement from side to side, which makes it difficult to pull off some special moves as quickly as you want to. But if you're after that arcade feeling, this is the joystick to get.



Negcon

By: **Namco**

Price: **\$89.95**

Feel: ★★★★★

Design: ★★★

Construction: ★★★★★

Software Support: **Fair (mostly driving games)**

The Negcon is an analog controller designed with driving games in mind. It works by twisting the pad along the centre split, thus allowing progressive steering. It also has two analog buttons for accelerator and brake functions, as well as two digital buttons and a digital up/down/left/right direction pad, but there are only two L and R shoulder buttons.

As stated, the Negcon is designed specifically for use with driving games and there's not much point in getting one if you don't play many of them. Its design is also a point of contention; some people feel at ease with it, but many others will find it too flat, as it doesn't really give you anything to get a decent grip on. As for how well its progressive turning works with the games that do support it, the Negcon performs quite well, but this does have a lot to do with the software. *Formula 1* and *Ridge Racer* are especially suited to it and you'll find your lap times dropping considerably because you can get around the corners much more smoothly. Try one before you buy it, if you can.



Specialised asciiPad

By: **Asciiware**

Price: **\$69.95**

Feel: ★★★

Design: ★★

Construction: ★★

Software Support: **All**

Asciiware's specialised asciiPad has all the useless features we praised the Namco Arcade Stick for not having. This pad is an alternative to the standard controllers, which is good, but is unfortunately not very nice to use. The four main action buttons have a good feel, but outside of that it's not so good. The directional pad is fair, but not as precise as the one on the regular controller. As for the shoulder buttons, they are ridiculously narrow and set too close together. This is the crux of the asciiPad's problems. This pad is a complete ergonomic failure and can actually be physically painful to use after a very short time. In particular, it doesn't utilise the angled style of the regular controller which is probably the best feature of them. It costs more than a regular controller and isn't nearly as good. Disappointing.



Standard PlayStation Controller

By: Sony
Price: \$49.95
Feel: ★★★★★
Design: ★★★★★
Construction: ★★★★★
Software Support: All

You should all be familiar with Sony's distinctive original joypad. Its pronged design looks a bit odd, but it is actually one of the more successful joypad designs and has been copied by more than a few PC joypad manufacturers. The best feature is its sturdy construction. This baby can handle just about as much punishment as you can dish out - tantrums after being beaten by cheating computer opponents included. Its main weakness is the placement of the four L and R buttons, they're just a little bit too close for comfort, though this is only noticeable when you have to use them all at once. What would be nice is if someone would make a standard controller, but on a slightly larger scale. Minor quibbles aside, this pad is probably the best value for money around.



PlayStation Mouse

By: Sony
Price: \$49.95
Feel: ★★★★★
Design: ★★★★★
Construction: ★★★★★
Software Support: Not a lot

A mouse for a console? Why not! Some of the best games take advantage of the mouse and it isn't just for strategy and adventure games. Sony's mouse compares favourably with the better PC mice and has a similar feel to the much lauded Microsoft Mouse. It also comes with one of the slickest mouse pads around; together they feel like rubbing baby oil into firm, yet supple ... ahem, we must not digress.

While the obvious games to use a mouse with are *Sim City 2000*, *Broken Sword* and the like, *Final Doom* also supports rodent activity and doing so vastly improves the game. There currently aren't a huge number of games which take advantage of the mouse, but this situation is bound to improve over time.



Analog Stick

By: Sony
Price: \$119.95
Feel: ★★★★★
Design: ★★★★★
Construction: ★★★★★
Software Support: Few

This huge beast has been designed especially for use in combat-style games which put the player in the cockpit, although it can be used with almost any game, particularly in top-down shooters like *Robotron X*. The main feature of the sticks is that they provide true analog response; push them a little and you move a little, push them more and you move faster. All the buttons can be found by your fingers and thumbs around the ergonomic sticks, as well as being laid out flat in between them. Despite its size, it's surprisingly light and you can rest it firmly on your lap without discomfort. One thing we would have liked to have seen would have been an option to set the angle of stick movement. As is, the sticks move about 45° either way. This seems a bit too far sometimes, but this isn't a real problem and can easily be over-looked. It would also have been nice if the sticks had a bit more weight to them. There's currently only one game that's really worth acquiring an Analog Stick for, *MechWarrior 2*.



Specialised Joystick

By: Ascii
Price: \$99.95
Feel: ★★
Design: ★★★★★
Construction: ★★★
Software Support: All

For many older gamers, the problem with console games has always been "hands too big, controller too small", so whenever there are other control options, we like to check them out. The Specialised Joystick for the PlayStation is one such option that's been available for a while. With nice big buttons which have independent turbo control and boasting the ability to throw 36 punches a second, it appears promising. While the buttons do function quite nicely, the joystick itself is sloppy and unresponsive. These kinds of sticks are primarily designed for fighting games, but extensive tests with *Street Fighter Alpha 2*, and *Tobal No.1* found it to be sadly lacking in this department. In attempting to play other games where more accuracy is needed, control with this joystick is next to impossible.



* Predator Light Gun

By: Logic 3
Price: \$79.95
Feel: ★★★
Design: ★★★
Construction: ★★★★★
Software Support: Few

Light gun games have always been popular in arcades, but replicating them on a home console has not been quite as successful. This is mainly due to the painful chore of having to move the on-screen crosshairs around with a regular joypad. This can be slow and frustrating at the best of times. But with a light gun, your problems are solved - just point and squeeze the trigger.

The Predator gun is a solid piece and feels fairly comfortable, but after a while you may begin to feel its weight. It also lacks additional buttons which some games use for selecting special weapons and the two buttons it does have are situated on the side of the gun, requiring the use of two hands at times.

The main problem, however, is that there aren't many light gun games currently available. *Area 51* and *Die Hard Trilogy* are about the only ones which are worthwhile, but more will be out by the end of the year.





Mad Catz Steering Wheel

By: HES

Price: \$159.95

Feel: ★★

Design: ★★★★★

Construction: ★★★

Software Support: Fair (mostly driving games)

For the full sensation of driving you need a steering wheel and foot pedals, and that's what the Mad Catz offers. The wheel and pedals are all analog, giving you the feel of being in the driver's seat. The wheel itself is dotted with all the extra buttons on its face and behind the grip, and has an up/down gear stick protruding from the side.

There are a few things, though which need to be pointed out. The main thing is that you'll need to put the wheel on something solid such as an angled desk or low table - resting it on your lap just doesn't work. Another, though fairly minor point, is that the replay feature on some games like *Formula 1* doesn't work due to the memory needed to handle the analogue inputs. This can be overcome, however, by plugging your standard joypad back in for these functions.

The only real problem is that there isn't any feedback to the wheel so it feels just as light whether you're making a slight correction to your course as it does when you're taking a hairpin at 120kph. Still, the Mad Catz is the best steering wheel available.



Memory Cards

By: Sony

Price: \$39.95

Software support: Good

Memory cards are one of the more useful accessories for the PlayStation. Not all games require you to save a position, but those that do will offer passwords or let you save the game to a memory card, or a choice of either. Memory cards can also be used to save high scores or best times, controller configurations and general settings in many games like *Tobal No. 1*, thus saving you time fiddling around at the start of the game.

Memory cards can store up to 15 memory blocks, and most games only use one of these, although some games with lots of statistics to keep track of (such as sport games with full seasons) may take up a few more. Put your memory card into the PlayStation and turn it on without a game and you'll be able to go to the memory manager which allows you to see all your files and copy them to other cards or delete them individually. Most people will only need one memory card unless you have an excessively large collection of games.



Multi-tap four-player adaptor

By: Sony

Price: \$89.95

Software support: Good (mostly team sport games)

The multi-tap lets up to five players take part in a game and eight players if you have two of these devices. The multi-tap plugs into the joypad port and you then plug the joypads into the multi-tap. If you often have a lot of friends over who crave getting in on the action, a multi-tap is a wise investment which will keep everyone happy. It is particularly suited to sports games such as basketball, soccer and hockey, but there are a lot of other games which also use it, including some racing games like *Street Racers* (which offers up to eight players simultaneously with two multi-taps).



Link Cable

By: Sony

Price: \$49.95

Software support: Fair (mostly racing games)

Should you be fortunate enough to own two TVs or have a friend with another PlayStation who doesn't mind lugging it and his TV around to you place from time to time, think about getting a link cable. Simply, it allows you to hook up two TV and two PlayStations together for unrivalled two-player excitement otherwise available only in arcades. The only catch is that you need to have two copies of the game you wish to play, but if you can link up often, it's more than worth the effort. Some of the best games available support the link-up facility including *Wipeout 2097*, *Formula 1* and *Final Doom*. Link-up is the only way to have two-player matches in these games, but some two-player split-screen games can be linked up for four-player thrills.



RF Cable

By: Sony

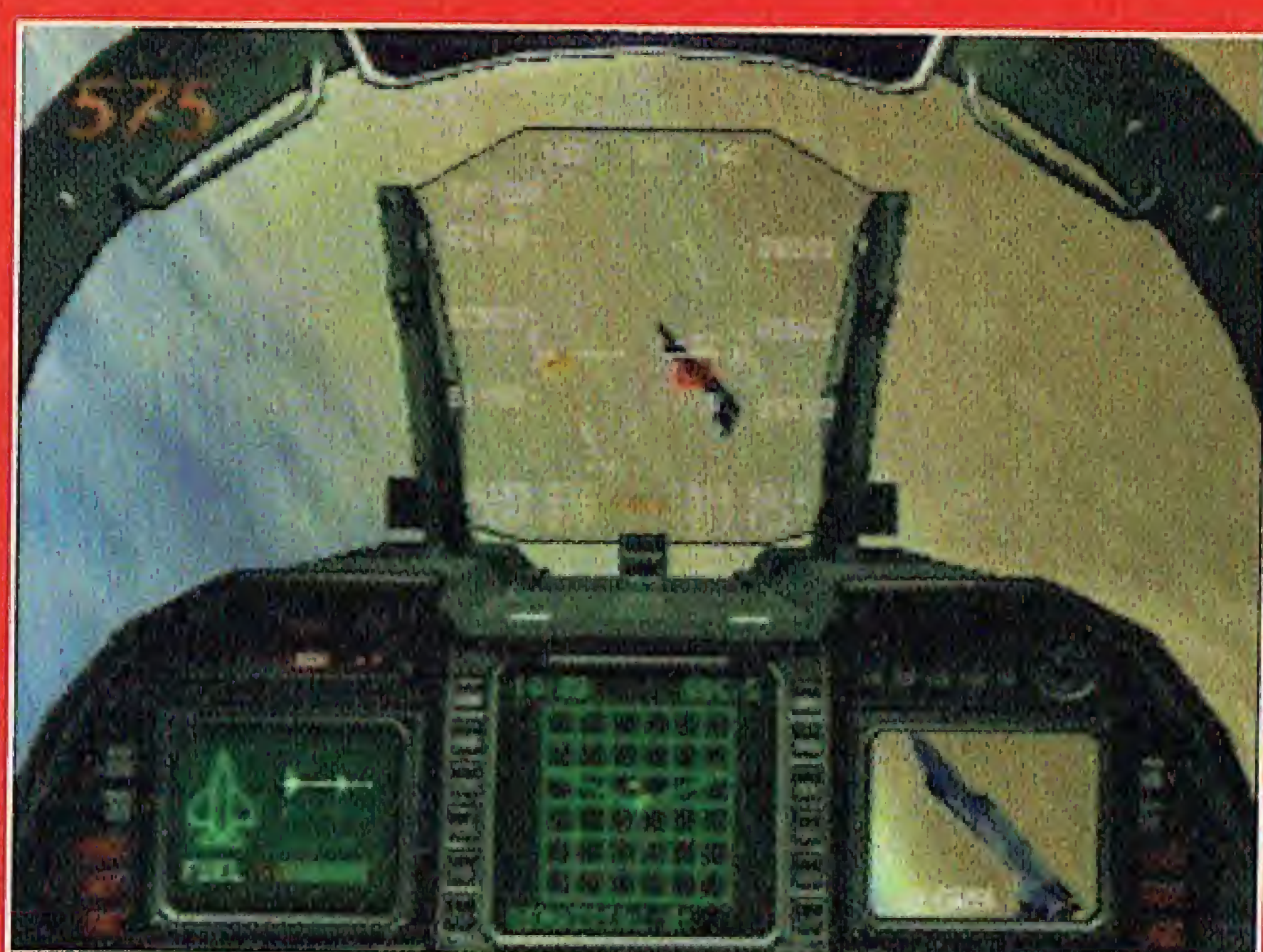
Price: \$45.95

Not an accessory but a necessity for people who own older television sets which lack the RCA jacks for the video and stereo cable. The picture quality isn't quite as good, nor is the sound, but most people won't notice or care. But hey, you gotta do what you gotta do.

WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN

BATTLE PACKS!

Win one of two Battle Packs from Sony and Activision



Each Battle Pack consists of:

- One Sony Analog Stick
- One copy of Activision's MechWarrior 2
- One copy of Sony's Raging Skies



Sony wanted us to tell everyone how wonderful their Analog Stick is. We thought what better way than to give two lucky readers the chance to find out for themselves!

But to get the most out of the Analog Stick, you need to experience games which have been designed especially to take advantage of it. That's where **MechWarrior 2** and **Raging Skies** come in.

TO WIN, send us your drawing or design of the ultimate MechWarrior.

Conditions of entry:

1. This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand. 2. Entries must be received by May 31, 1997. 3. Employees of Next Publishing, Sony Computer Entertainment and Activision may not enter. 4. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence may be entered into. 5. Please try to keep you entry to one page.

Send your entry to:

My Mech's bigger than your Mech comp

PlayStation Magazine, P.O. Box 634, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012

ACTIVISION



TIME TO RIOT!

RIOT IS THE LATEST WORD IN FUTURISTIC ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE MASSES AND WE'RE GIVING TEN READERS A CHANCE TO TASTE THE FUTURE.

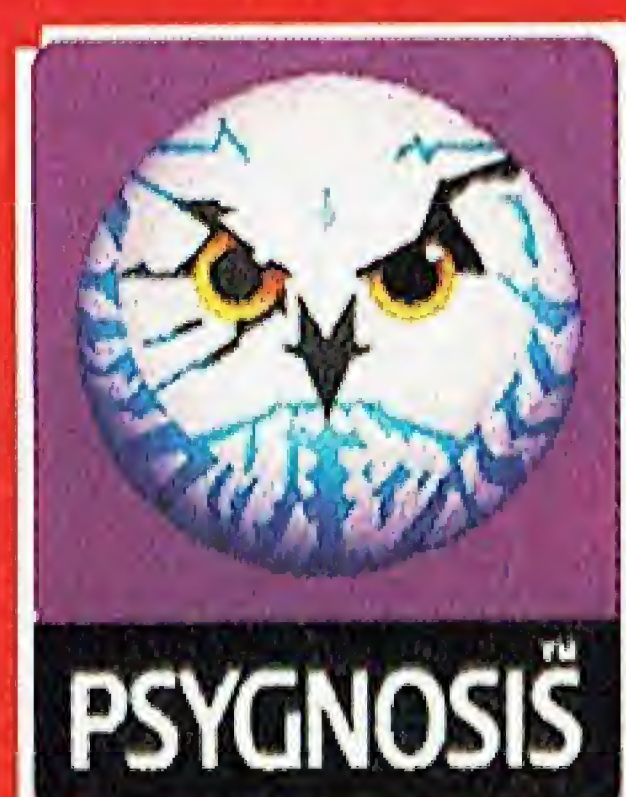


Psygnosis has given us ten copies of Riot to give away, but if you want to win one you'll have to answer the following question:

Q: Name a movie featuring a futuristic sport

A trip to the sci-fi section of your local video shop (or thorough perusal of the first issue of this magazine) should provide you with a few answers. When you've found the one you're after, write the name of it on the back of an envelope and send it to the following address:

I'D BUY THAT FOR A DOLLAR!, PlayStation Magazine, PO Box 634, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012



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WIN THE BEAR!

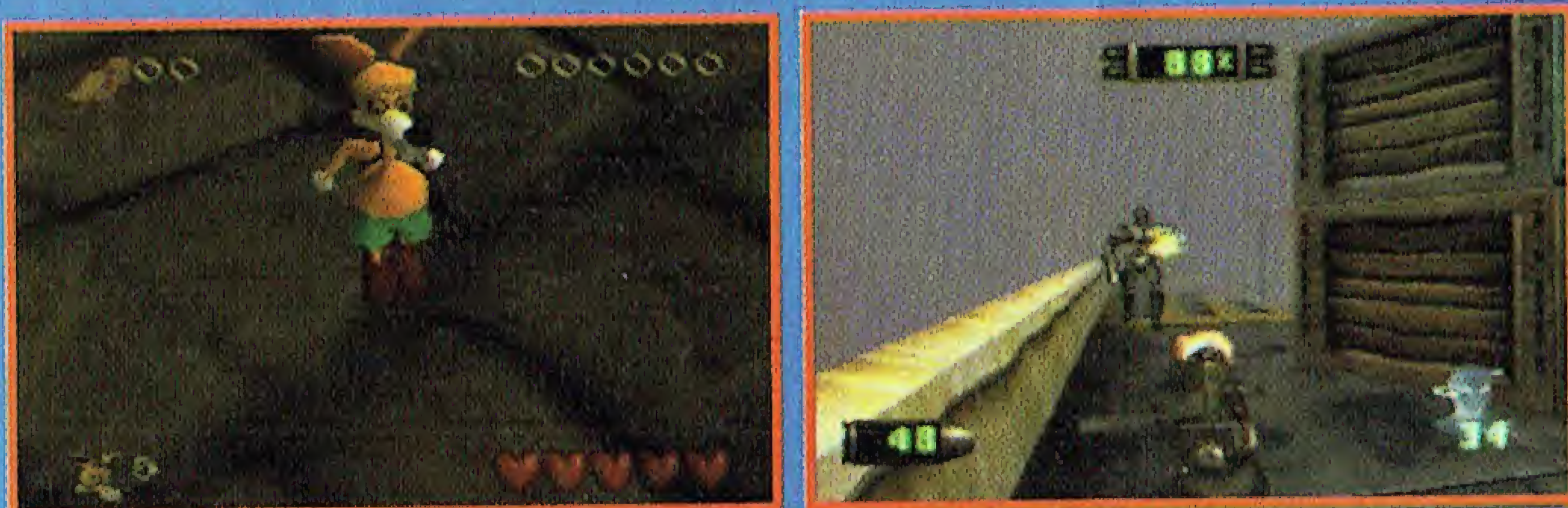
(And a couple of games)

That's right, you can
win your very own
Disruptor Bear!

Only six of these teddy bears were internally disrupted for promotional use, and we're giving one macarbe reader the chance to win our bloodied bear!

But wait! There's more!

The winner of the torn-apart teddy also gets a copy of Disruptor and Cheesy. Sorry, steak knives not included.



First prize:

- One teddy bear, (slight internal damage)
- One copy of Disruptor
- One copy of Cheesy

Five second prizes:

- One copy of Disruptor
- One copy of Cheesy

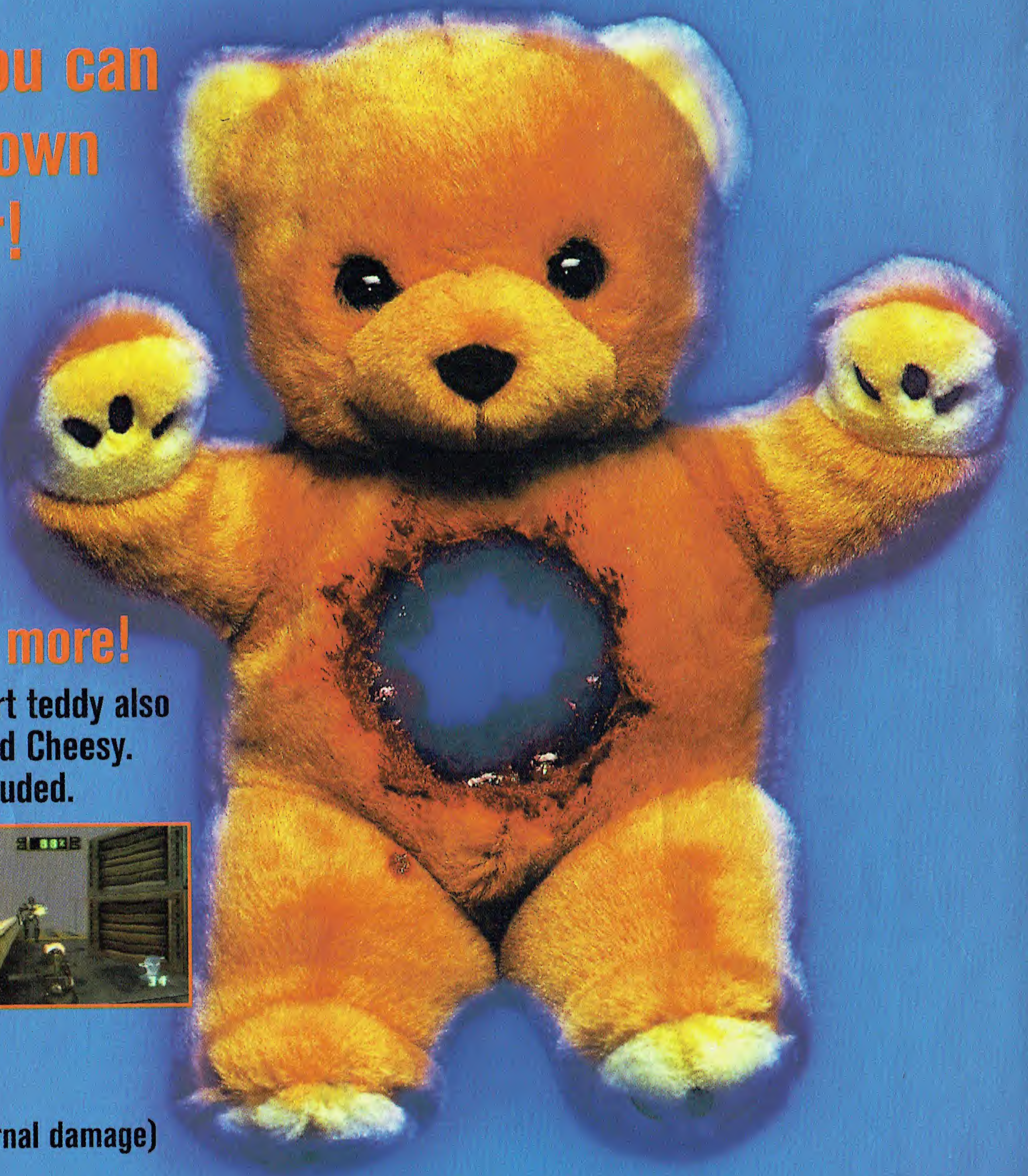
TO WIN, tell us in less than 20 words
how you think the bear was injured.

Write your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to:

Give me the bear! PlayStation Magazine PO Box 634 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

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**ROADSHOW
NEW MEDIA**



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Head to Head

We compare a selection of similar games to help you decide which one is the right for you

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Official Australian PlayStation Magazine Ratings Guide

Every game featured in our Play Test section has been reviewed independently and objectively by our team of writers. We aim to give you an informed idea of what the game is about and, most importantly, whether it's good or bad.

Each title reviewed receives an overall score out of 10 which should be seen in the context of the type of game and in relation to similar titles it's competing with. For example; a score of 7 is high praise for a 16-bit style 2D platform game, whereas a 3D fighting game receiving the same score is by no means sub standard, but indicates that it could have been better when seen next to the likes of *Tekken 2* and *Tobal No.1*.

Additionally, the following factors are awarded up to five stars

- Graphics** - Does the game look good and has it taken advantage of the technology?
- Sound** - CDs give developers the potential to create mind blowing audio. Have they?
- Gameplay** - This is what it boils down to. Is the game any good to play?
- Lifespan** - Will you still be playing the game next week or next year?
- Originality** - Does this game offer anything new or is it a clone of last month's hit?

PlayStation

The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine

Review team

Andrew Iredale

Our hard working editor has been working hard to scam himself a test drive of the Porsche Boxter. 'Background research', he calls it.

Amos Wong

All work stopped at the Wong household after the new Macross game turned up. "But Amos, the game's crap!" "But Andrew, it's *Macross*!"

Nick & Tim Smith

When our dynamic duo moved into their new house, the first thing they did was to hook up their PlayStation. Worry about the furniture later.

Clyde E. Scope

Between polishing off reviews and long-necks of VB, our new boy Clyde has been very busy this month!

Stretch Armstrong

Will Stretch ever lay his hands on the perfect soccer game? Not this issue.

Adrian Bertram

The Black Pig, as he is known to his confidants, had one of his neighbours screaming outside his window at 3am to "Turn that bloody noise down!" And he wasn't talking about the music.

- 10** - Exceptional, in a class of its own!
- 9** - High quality game, strongly recommended
- 8** - Well above average, more than worthy of attention
- 7** - A good game with little to complain about
- 6** - A bit on the average side, but not at all bad
- 5** - Not quite as good as it could have been
- 4** - This is not what you bought a PlayStation for!
- 3** - Oh dear, something has gone horribly wrong...
- 2** - Don't bother, a waste of both time and money
- 1** - Impress your friends with a cool black drink coaster!

Difficulty: A rough idea of the degree of difficulty to expect when you initially play the game, however most give you the option to tamper with the skill level.

Players: Number of players supported. Any more than two and you'll need a Multitap four-player adaptor, unless...

Link-Up: Two PlayStations and (usually) two copies of the game are required. And don't forget the extra TV.

Control: The standard joypad works with all games, although many recent titles take advantage of analogue devices (Negcon, Mad Catz) or the PlayStation Mouse.

Memory Card: Some games require a memory card to save secret things and newly discovered levels or circuits. Other games provide you with a password to jot down.

*Soul Blade

Amos Wong, still reeling from Tekken 2 and Tobal No. 1, once again finds himself drawn into the arena of 3D fighting as Soul Blade slashes its way onto the PlayStation

PUBLISHER:	Namco
DEVELOPER:	Namco
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	March
PRICE:	\$89.95*
GAME TYPE:	Fighting
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
NO. OF PLAYERS:	One or two
LINK UP:	No
CONTROL:	Namco stick
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	M15



The clash of steel against steel, the amazingly detailed in-game graphics and spectacular special moves put Soul Blade in a class of its own.

The intro to *Soul Blade* is one of the most stunning productions yet seen on the PlayStation, easily eclipsing *Tekken 2*'s jaw dropping sequence. Virtually a music clip set to a suitably rockin' pop song, the lifelike expressions of the characters, fluidity of movement and incredible film direction - especially in the action sequences - will leave you breathless! In the opening credits alone, a medieval tower crashes down on hapless soldiers as the dashing Knight Siegfried narrowly escapes on horseback, curvaceous assassin Taki vanquishes a demon with a spell and leaps to safety from the ensuing explosion; it's all rendered so richly that you won't want to skip it every time you start it up.

The game graphics are equally stunning - Namco has packed great detail into the fighters and backgrounds. The 10 warriors from around the world available appear much smoother than those in *Tekken 2*. Their costumes (each has four varieties) are gloriously textured, often undulating along with their hair as they fight. Their lips even move as they give the 'victory speech'! Their diverse weapons range from Li Long's nunchaku, Mitsurugi's samurai sword and the freakish Voldo's Katar knives. A nice graphical touch is the motion trail left by the weapons during

flashy attacks. Their fighting styles are equally unique - Voldo's crab-like attacks and fighting stance are particularly bizarre indeed.

Although the animation isn't quite as fluid as *Tekken 2* or *Tobal*, the overall effect is still very impressive. The polygon backgrounds incorporate animated elements such as billowing flags, flames or even a ship sailing past. To up the pressure, the size of the battle areas can be increased or decreased to make those 'ring outs' even more of a danger. The look of each stage gradually changes through the length of battle, for example, Ninja Taki's stage shifts from day to night, complete with hovering fireflies and glowing spirit balls for extra ambience. The lighting and colour palette of the fighters also changes to reflect the more sombre atmosphere.

Tekken 2 fans will have to unlearn everything for *Soul Blade*, as the fighting systems are drastically different. Fighters can move around and behind opponents to dodge and counterstrike. The system, while not offering the total freedom of *Tobal*, nevertheless takes the action into a more 3D arena. The controls are very similar to those in *Star Gladiator*, ie. a vertical attack, horizontal attack, a kick and block, and the shoulder buttons

which can be assigned to move you from side to side. The block button adds to combat realism: low blocks will not work against high attacks and vice versa. As a result, you really have to play defensively and strategically.

There's an abundance of impressive moves for each character: throws which can be extended, counters, an unblockable move as well as a mighty impressive 'Critical Edge' combo (done by pressing all three attack buttons at once) which you can augment with more attacks. This move saps energy from the smaller weapons meter, so it's best used to finish off opponents, but it looks great - your weapon becomes supercharged as you perform a fast and furious attack with energy arcing everywhere! Should the weapon's meter deplete, you'll lose your weapon and will have to resort to hand combat. Normal combos are performed by pressing a sequence of buttons. Some may find it a bit tricky as they really have to be pressed in quick succession - more so than in *T2* - to carry out a combo. Some will find this a flaw, others may see it as more of a challenge.

Soul Blade's game modes are almost identical to the ones in *Tekken 2*, although most of them have enhanced features. For example, the practice mode now has a comprehensive list of moves



Your final challenge in the arcade mode is to strike down this archer - while avoiding his arrows. Careful timing is the key to survival.



Siegfried stabs Han Myong with his exceedingly large chopper (left). Note the realistic shadows of the fighters.



you can access, you can set the proficiency of your sparring partner's attack and defence, or even set them to unleash their 'Critical Edge' combos constantly.

A new addition is the Edge Master mode, a quest game in which, you embark on a journey around the world to face the others fighters. Upon completing each stage you are awarded a new weapon of which there are eight in total per character. These vary in terms of weight and their attack/blocking strength; some even gradually replenish your energy bar! These can be saved for use in the other game modes. While the first few opponents can be defeated in the usual manner, later foes only have one weakness which you must discover and exploit in order to beat them. Standard hits cause no damage and with

some you can't even kick them out of the ring! As the arcade mode CPU opponents on the hardest setting can still be fairly easy to beat at times, Edge Master mode, as the title suggests, offers the toughest challenge (and rewards) for hardcore players, as upon completion you are awarded two extra characters to play with.

As a weapons based fighter, *Soul Blade* easily beats the existing competition in terms of visuals and playability. *Toshinden 2*'s movements seem restrictive by comparison; *Star Gladiator* simply doesn't have the variety of moves and its other-worldly characters don't hold the same appeal. The sheer amount of tactics to learn, weapons to earn and game modes will keep you going for a long while and its overall presentation is second to none.

When compared to the full spectrum of fighting games however, the choice is more difficult. Perhaps it's the hand to hand combat and slightly meatier sound effects of *Tekken 2* which still make it the most brutal fighter available, even though in terms of visuals and gameplay it has been ousted by this latest effort by Namco. *Tobal No. 1*'s fighting system is more fluid in its real 3D freedom and has a more realistic and subtle feel. There's no doubt, however, about the the rush one gets from a protracted round in *Soul Blade*: the clash of steel, brief panic when your weapons lock and desperation when you resort to hand to hand combat. It's a knuckle-shredding essential purchase for fighting game fans. Even if you're not, take a look anyway. You may be converted.



The rendered introduction to *Soul Blade* is an epic feature in its own right.



Han throws Taki up and prepares to impale her as she falls back to earth (top left). Mitsurugi succumbs to Han's slicing blade (lower right).



You can play survival mode as well as a quest mode that will earn you extra weapons.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	Fast, furious and packed with detail and effects.
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Excellent effects, but the music is awfully cheesy
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Stiff response, but otherwise a fantastic knuckle whitener!
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	That Edge Master mode will keep you busy...
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★	Hardly revolutionary, but its wealth of features distinguish it

■ OVERALL: Impressive production values and stunning graphics elevate *Soul Blade* to a level rarely seen in a PlayStation game. A must for fanatical fighting game freaks and well worth a look for everyone else.

9

OUT OF TEN

Porsche Challenge

Andrew Iredale had a few points left on his driver's licence, so we gave him the keys to the new Porsche Boxster. Notice we used the word 'had'.

PUBLISHER:	Sony
DEVELOPER:	SCEE Internal
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Driving
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Supports Negcon
MEMORY CARD:	Save new tracks
CLASSIFICATION:	G



From every angle the cars look like the real thing. Mmmm de-licious curves. Scrumdiddlyumptious, to be precise.

Car games on the PlayStation generally fall into two categories: those which go for over the top thrills and excitement, such as *Ridge Racer* and *Burning Road*; and others like *Formula 1* and *The Need For Speed* which try to be more realistic. *Porsche Challenge* belongs in the later category, attempting to replicate the handling dynamics and characteristics of the new Porsche Boxster.

The first thing you'll notice about *Porsche Challenge* is the incredibly slick rendered representations of the Boxster - no sharp-edged polygons here. From all angles the cars look identical to the real things and so they should, since they are based closely on the actual models designed by Porsche. The paint jobs look convincing and the shading across them

changes in relation to the lighting sources as the cars travel in and out of different situations. The cars look solid too, and this is backed up by the way the their chassis are subject to G-forces. Brake hard coming into a turn and the body lurches forward and tilts slightly to the side - not too much, mind you, as the Boxster is renowned for its impeccable road manners. View the game from a distance and you could well be excused for thinking you're watching a video of the real thing!

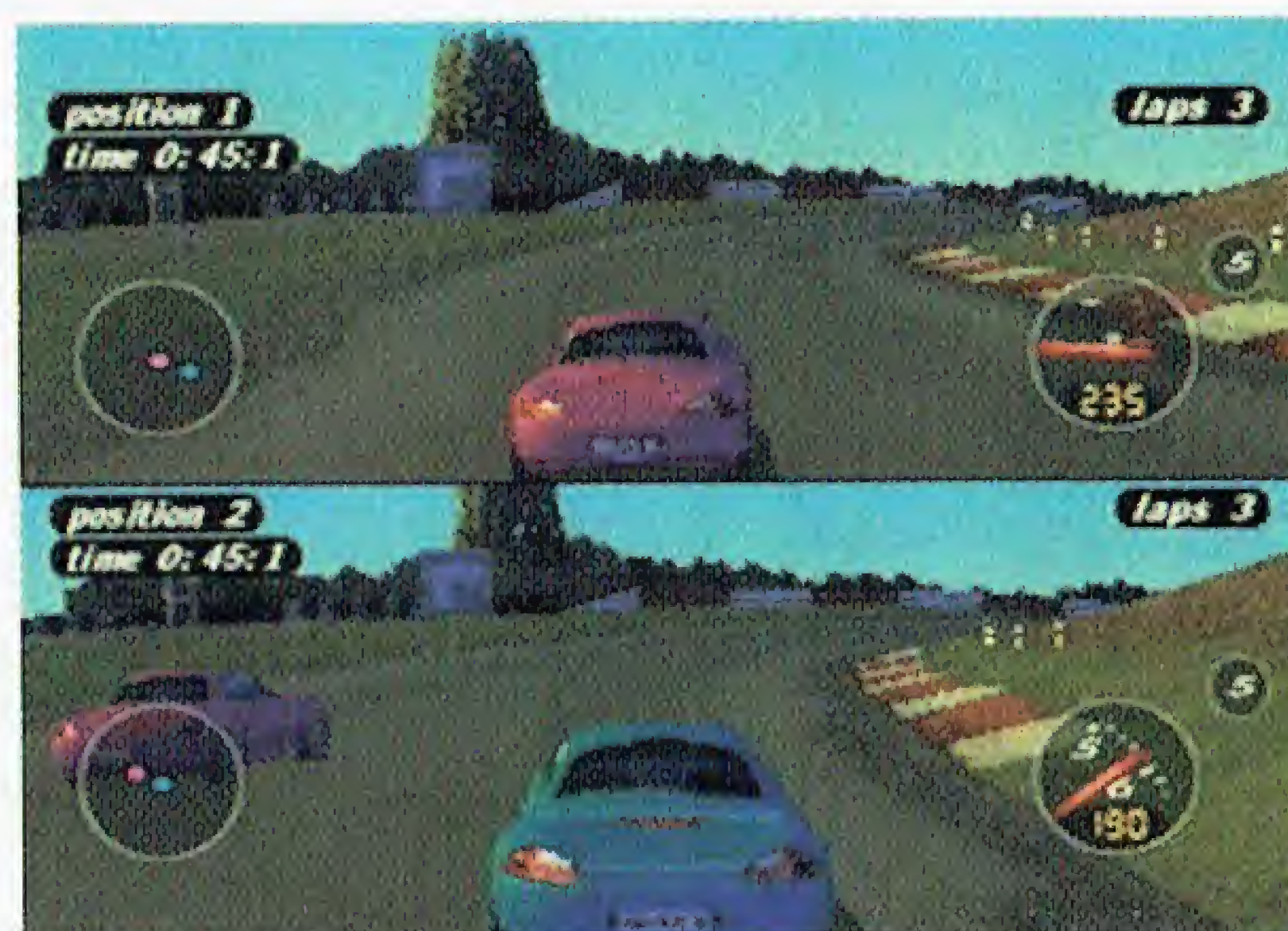
Of course, looking good is only part of the story. The real emphasis in *Porsche Challenge* is on the handling of the car. Initial experiences with the game may give the impression that it's a bit unresponsive, but after an extended session you'll begin to appreciate how

sharp the handling really is. Forget the Arcade Mode, it's far too forgiving for it allows you to cut corners and brake late or not at all, using the barriers to bounce the car back onto the track. This deprives you of learning the skills necessary to successfully master your control over the Boxster.

The Simulation Mode, however, is where the real enjoyment and satisfaction awaits. Here you have to apply your full concentration to the task at hand, be it hand-braking around a sharp hair-pin turn or gunning it down a long stretch of open road. Putting an outside wheel on the shoulder of the road results in loss of traction and pulls the car even further off your intended line. But get it right, and you'll notice how much better you



The 'View Boxter' option provides a brief rundown of the concept development of Porsche's new baby.



The two-player split-screen game loses little in the way of speed and detail (top row). "Hey baby, wanna come for a ride? I'll show you my fluffy dice!"



Pressing down on the control pad switches to rear-view (top left). The road blocks change in interactive mode (top right). Ramming speed! A friendly nudge will get your point across (lower).

perform. This is especially the case when it comes to lining up corners and chicanes, where taking a smooth line can be the difference between victory and retirement.

It's also important to work the engine to get the most out of it (and maximize its potential). The automatic transmission is fine for learning circuits, but to really do well, you need to come to grips with the manual Triptonic gearbox. Unlike most other driving games which allow you to drop down a gear or two to get around corners, you have to learn when to back off and apply the brakes. Sticking it into a lower gear will let you make a fast entry into turns, but you will lose much of your momentum and therefore not be able to make as fast an exit. In this respect the game is very realistic, for as in real life smooth driving is the key to success. Line up the corner, back off as you come into it, dab the brakes if necessary just before you hit the apex then drop down a gear if need be and accelerate out of it in one fluid motion. On fast straights, use the brakes to scrub off speed before you hit the

them. Hair-pin bends may require a quick squeeze of the hand-brake to flick the back around, but don't be too heavy on it or you'll end up facing the wrong way.

One of the unique features of the game is the interactive versions of the tracks, available only when you've beaten the long and short circuits of each of the four tracks. The interactive bit means that the boom gates and blockades change position each lap depending on your performance. These changes sometimes don't become obvious until you're upon them, so your reaction time must be sharp. This results in each race being varied and unpredictable.

The word unpredictable is also a good description of the other drivers you're racing with. Each has their own personality, but you're never quite sure whether they're going to zig or zag in front of you when you're trying to pass. Even when you do get in front of them, you have to be aware that they don't sneak past you on the next corner. Fortunately, they are fallible and it's not uncommon to see a bit of rough play between cars ahead of you or even the

leader slamming into one of the mobile obstacles that pepper the courses, especially in 'evil' mode.

Porsche Challenge is definitely one of the more impressive 'realistic' driving games around. The handling of the Boxsters gets better and better the more you practice and the circuits are thoughtfully designed so that they don't become predictable after you've learnt all the bends. It's one of those games in which it's a real challenge to reel off perfect laps one after another, so the incentive to do better is always there, even when you've won all there is to win. But wait, there's more! We almost forgot to mention the two-player split screen mode which lets you and a friend hoon around head to head with only a barely noticeable drop in speed from the full-screen game.

If you enjoy proper driving games which concentrate on realistic performance and handling, you'd better take a good look at *Porsche Challenge*. It might not have the 'wow' factor of lots of bright colours, but the more you play it the more you discover how good a driving game it really is.

Alternatives

If you enjoyed *Formula 1* and *The Need For Speed* you'll probably like *Porsche Challenge*.

- GRAPHICS: ★★★★★ The Boxsters look fabulous and the scenery is subtle, if a little sparse
- SOUND: ★★★★★ Good music and sound effects, but the engine noise could be louder
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★★★ A very good driving model with more depth to it than is first apparent
- LIFESPAN: ★★★★★ A challenge to master. Two-player split-screen!
- ORIGINALITY: ★★★★★ As driving games go, this is refreshingly different

■ OVERALL: *Porsche Challenge* is one of the most realistic car games to date and becomes more rewarding as your skills improve. A first-class driving simulation that's fun to play.

9

OUT OF TEN

Dark Forces

He's been to the depths of Hell and back, survived countless scum sucking aliens, now Amos Wong has the might of the Imperial Army to contend with!

PUBLISHER:	Lucas Arts
DEVELOPER:	Lucas Arts
DISTRIBUTOR:	Playcorp
RELEASE:	March
PRICE:	\$89.95 *
GAME TYPE:	Doom-style
DIFFICULTY:	Medium
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Quite handy
CONTROLLER:	Standard pad
CLASSIFICATION:	M

As Kyle Katarn, a mercenary hired by The Alliance, your mission is to infiltrate various Imperial installations and perform acts of espionage. It has come to the Rebels' attention that a new Imperial weapon, known only as the Dark Trooper, is in development and you've been given the job of uncovering further information. Of course, it won't be an easy mission, as the areas you'll be sent to are swarming with various human and non-human enemies working for the Empire who won't hesitate in taking you out on sight! Are you up for it? Plus, of course, your favourite enemies from the movies are here: Storm Troopers, Imperial Officers and Commandos; nasty mechanical critters like the Probe and Interrogation Droids as well as a variety other-worldly bounty hunters, including Boba Fett.

Premise aside, *Dark Forces* is a *Doom*-like first person shooter set in the *Star Wars* universe. As with most games of this type, you start out on your missions armed with a generic blaster and, in your travels, you can appropriate a variety of more devastating weapons. These include thermal detonators, mortar guns, concussion rifles and IM mines which detonate on a timer or upon detecting motion, much like *Duke Nukem's* pipe bombs.

Objectives usually have to do with acquiring an object, locating and activating/shutting down a device, taking out a base or finding somebody hidden within the sprawling levels. There's a map function which cleverly superimposes over your point of view so you can get your bearings without flicking back and forth between screens, and a PDA which lets you adjust the map zoom and check where you've already been. It also shows you all the items you're carrying, displays your mission objectives and how many of them you've completed.

Despite its obvious inspiration, *Dark Forces* obeys the laws of physics in so far as you will die or sustain damage if you leap from too great a height. Your character has



Storm Troopers are the most common enemy you'll come up against. Show no mercy!

movement options like looking up and down, crouching, crawling and jumping. There's a greater variety of objects to pick up which aid your progress beyond sheer firepower, such as air masks and spiked boots.

The graphics department is perhaps the weakest feature of *Dark Forces*: the colour palette is very flat and the overall level of detail is quite low. Your enemies become heavily pixelated up close, and are animated rather stiffly. Even the texture mapping is coarse. As a result, you never get the awesome impression of really being amongst your surroundings like in *Doom* or *Alien Trilogy*, despite some of the areas being impressively conceived and constructed. Thankfully, the game runs at a very smooth pace and there is a bit of atmospheric lighting - at least that's a consolation!

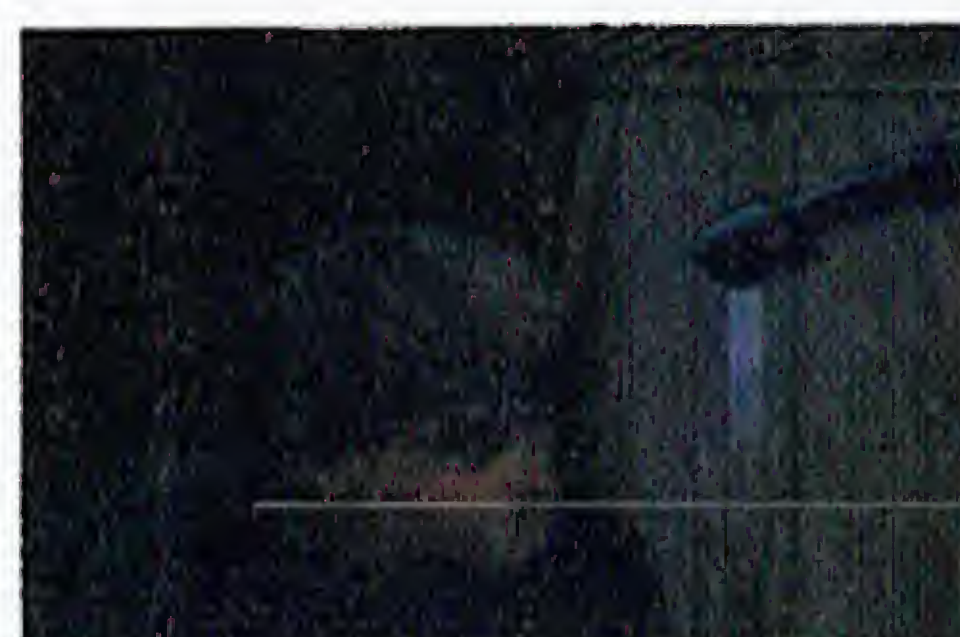
Veterans of *Doom* and *Alien Trilogy* will notice a lower level of fear and tension when playing *Dark Forces* - let's face it, turning around a corner to face a couple of skinny white Storm Troopers who yell out "There he is, halt!" simply does not compare to the terror of the ungodly roars from the beasts of Hell, nor a motion tracker's spine-

tingling whistle signalling multiple aliens!

Being a part of the *Star Wars* universe also means that the sick pleasures of the other two games are missing. Foes don't explode in a shower of blood 'n' guts or leave a heap of carnage on the ground. Nor do your weapons, no matter how powerful they may be, feel anywhere near as satisfying as pulling the trigger of a double barrelled shotgun at close range or launching a rocket down a corridor. In fact, there's very little difference in the destructive power of the weapons, the main concern being the energy or ammo they chew up.

The sound effects are generally excellent, most of them being taken from the movies. However, the music of this 'custom PlayStation version' is still the somewhat weedy electronic interpretation of the original score which has graced the other versions of this game - surely the orchestral soundtrack could have been substituted! As it stands, the music isn't that much better than the *Star Wars* games on the 16-bit systems, and only barely manages to enhance the atmosphere.

Nevertheless, after playing for a bit



The occasional animated sequence reveals plot developments (top). Rebel Jan Ors offers advice (below).



The sewer level is one of the most claustrophobic parts of the game. Foul creatures suddenly appear to gnaw on your flesh, all that's missing is the smell!



The Terminator endoskeleton? No, just a Dark Trooper on the prowl. You'll need more than your fists to subdue it, try tossing thermal detonators at it.

longer, the various inadequacies are quickly overlooked as one gets drawn into the world's clever level designs and mission objectives; you'll probably gape in awe at the mine level's subterranean layout! To find all the areas, you really have to use the items and moves at your disposal. For example, your headlamp will help your passage through tunnels in walls or subterranean areas and don't forget that you can crawl into low spaces, crouch to activate those awkwardly placed switches and jump over low walls into adjoining areas - of course check that there's ground to land on! Also to the game's credit, the fear factor increases

considerably during the claustrophobic sewer levels. Wading through waist deep sludge in near total darkness while on the look out for those sewer creatures that suddenly pop up in front of you to take a bite off your health can get quite tense at times, especially when your head lamp batteries are running low!

Whether *Dark Forces* is the game for you depends greatly on what you want out of a first person shooter. If you want an adrenalin pumped bloodbath, *Final Doom* is the obvious choice - nothing beats it. If it's gut wrenching terror and suspense, then I guess the big *D* is the winner again, although *Alien Trilogy* is

also a terrifying experience that gives you the great sensation of being immersed in the movie scenario. If we were to compare the two movie licenses, *Dark Forces* may be outgunned and out-gored, but the tremendous variety throughout its levels and the various tricks and traps they contain, along with greater interaction with the surroundings makes it a contender for those wanting more than just a bloody slaughter. It may not be quite as slick as newer titles like *Disruptor* and *Tenka*, and you need to put a bit more time into it before it gets up to pace, but if you're a *Star Wars* fan (or not) you'll find it thoroughly enjoyable



From the top: "Zing zing" go the lasers. Once the drop ship leaves you're on your own. The Jeron Fusion Cutter is good against multiple foes. Another pesky droid.



Play catch with the Storm Troopers (left). There's little room to move in the service ducts (middle). A Storm Trooper having trouble with his helmet (right).

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	Nicely designed, but looks like the old PC game it is
■ SOUND:	★★★	Gotta love that laser fire. But ugh - the music!
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★	Perhaps the most strategic of all the first person shooters
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	Whack the difficulty on hard and you've got a real challenge!
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	It's a <i>Doom</i> clone, but with a style of its own

■ OVERALL: *Dark Forces* really shows its age next to newer titles but it's a good effort nonetheless. Through the richness of the movies, this is more than merely a *Doom* ripoff, and plays very differently too.

8
OUT OF TEN

MechWarrior 2

Being stuck in a small metal cockpit with no air-conditioning may not be everyone's idea of a good time, but **Clyde E. Scope** managed to have fun, even without a bar fridge!

PUBLISHER:	Activision
DEVELOPER:	Quantum Factory
DISTRIBUTOR:	Roadshow
RELEASE:	April
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Mech sim
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Analog Stick
MEMORY CARD:	Passwords
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



After choosing a clan, you're treated to a nice rendered intro. Here we see that of Wolf Clan.



The 'Mech at the edge of the screen has turned its torso to face you, watch out (left). You've got one, but another has used its jump jets to escape (right).

MechWarrior 2 is a first person combat simulator in which you take control of huge mechanical death machines armed to the teeth with guns, lasers and rockets. Your job is to uphold the honour of your clan by annihilating all who stand in your path. This is achieved by going through a series of missions which require you to complete a primary and, more often than not, a secondary objective. Successful performance lets you progress through the ranks, granting access to bigger, more destructive 'Mechs.

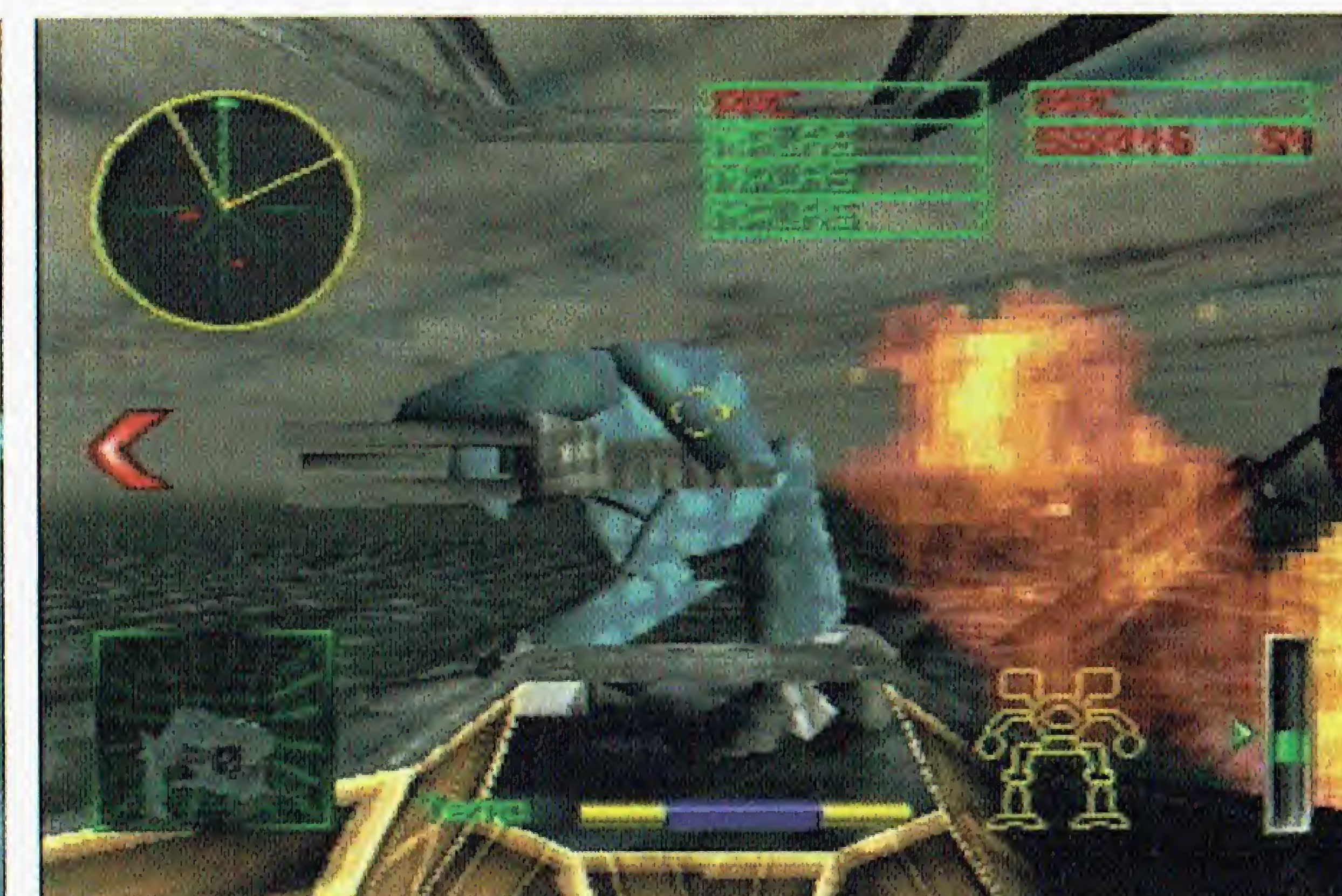
Missions vary from destroying enemy structures and Mechs, to performing guard duties for your own bases. The two sides to pick from, the

Wolf or Jade Falcon Clan, offer players a total of 48 missions to undertake - 16 of which are exclusive to the PlayStation version. In addition, there are several 'instant action' scenarios which allow you to choose any 'Mech and literally drop you in the middle of a battle on any one of a number of planets.

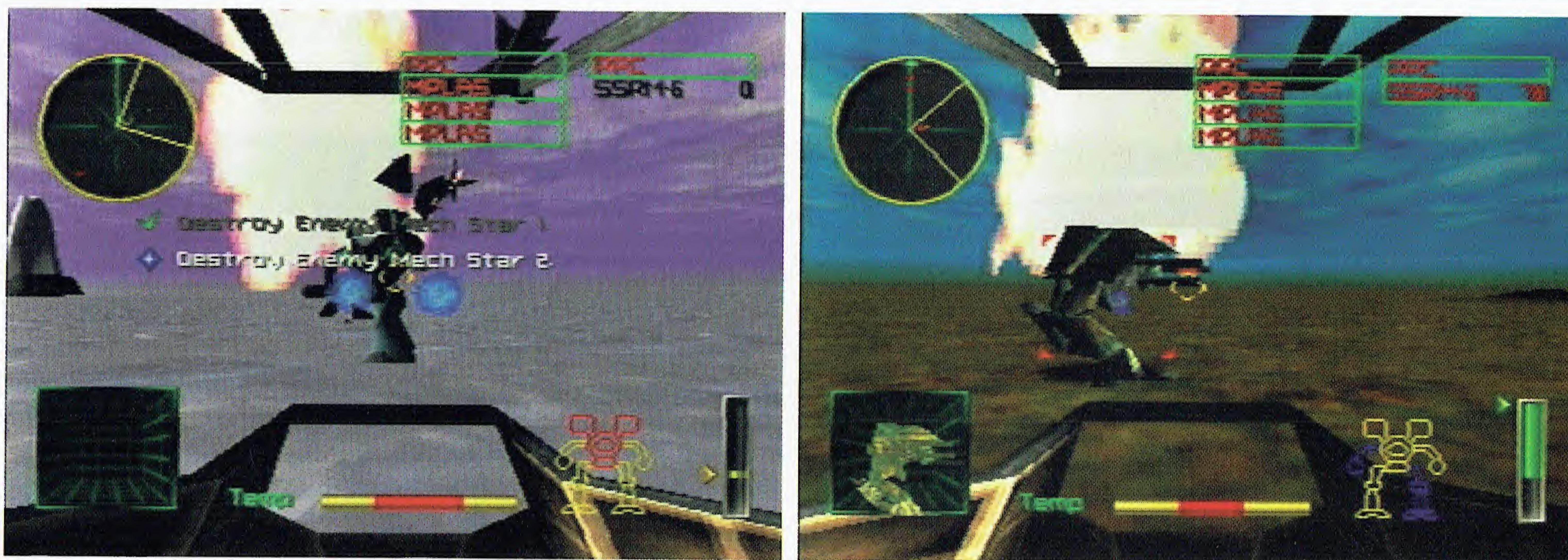
After receiving your orders, you can launch straight into the mission or you can visit the 'Mech Lab. Generally, the 'Mech which you have been pre-assigned is the right one for the job, but you have the option of changing the weapon configuration, or even selecting a different 'Mech if you feel it is more appropriate. There are 12 'Mechs to choose from, but the heaviest and most

powerful ones are reserved for later missions. The weapons can be assigned in up to three groups. This means that rather than cycling through each weapon individually, all weapons in each group are fired simultaneously. This allows you to group all the long or short range guns together, but if you try to pack too much of a punch you'll overheat. If this happens your 'Mech will automatically shut down for a few seconds while the heat dissipates - not a good look in the middle of a fire fight!

The different 'Mechs have their own characteristics such as weight, armour, speed and heat sink efficiency. The heat sink is needed to get rid of the heat generated by firing your weapons,



Missiles are good for long distance attacks (top left). Move in for the kill (top right). Oops, too close! (lower left) Attack them from the side (lower right).



The Particle Projectile Cannon (blue spheres) does a lot of damage, but causes a lot of heat (left). Nice explosion, but it'll take more than one hit to finish off the larger 'Mechs (right).

although different types of weapons produce varying amounts of heat. It's also interesting to note that some planets are hotter than others and on these you'll find your temperature gauge soaring more rapidly.

Once the mission starts you are dropped at the perimeter of the battle zone and this is when the fun starts. You may have to walk a distance to reach your primary objective so don't get caught up in minor skirmishes or it may be all over by the time you get there. From inside your 'Mech, you have a number of devices to help you on your mission. A radar indicates enemy activity in your vicinity and shows the orientation of your 'Mech's torso; up to 90° each way depending on which type of Mech you're in. This allows you to run in one direction while firing in another - a valuable survival technique in this game! A colour outline of your 'Mech displays any damage (blue, yellow, red, then kaputt) and it's possible to lose an arm or even a leg in battle and still carry on fighting. Some

'Mechs are equipped with jump jets, adding a new dimension to your combat style. Jump jets allow you to make lightning quick strikes on unsuspecting enemies or escape when the going gets tough. Fuel for these is limited, so use them sparingly.

MechWarrior 2 is fast paced with continuous action. It's not unusual to find yourself surrounded by enemy 'Mechs (they aren't all stupid) and it takes a little practice to get the hang of operating your 'Mech effectively, and as such, a training ground is available for you to practice on. Some combat techniques will require a bit of thought as standing still or running in a straight line will see you swiftly destroyed. The enemy 'Mechs are quite aggressive, and you may find that on your first few attempts you only last a minute or two. A new feature in the PlayStation version is the power-ups which can increase your health, weapons, rate of fire and even give you invincibility, but these are few and far between so don't rely on them.

The developers have done a brilliant job of rewriting *MechWarrior 2* for the PlayStation. The *MechWarrior* universe looks superb. As soon as you start moving, the sounds and motion combine to give you the feeling that you really are in one of these mechanised giants. The animation is very smooth with no visible slowdown - even when there are six or seven enemy 'Mechs firing at you. There is also a lot more action here than in the PC version - not to say that the PC version wasn't good, it's just that this sort of game works better with more of an emphasis on action than on strategy. It would have been nice if some of the features in the PC version were included in this game, but they aren't missed.

It's very hard to find fault with this game. As far as "walking 'round in a big metal suit blowing the crud out of other big metal suits" type games go, *MechWarrior* can't be bettered. If you've been complaining that there aren't any 'real' games on the PlayStation, this should shut you up for quite some time!



Want more? Come on then, I'll 'ave ya! (left). Taking out an airborne enemy is just so sweet! (centre). Sometimes it's wise to power-ups until you really need them (right).

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	A little bit of clipping, but looks convincingly solid
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Good sound effects and a curious mix of music
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★	You have total control - and with an Analog Stick you're there!
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	You won't finish it in a hurry and it's always good for a quick blast
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★	The first 'proper' 'Mech game on the PlayStation

■ OVERALL: *MechWarrior 2* on the PlayStation exceeds all expectations. A damn fine game, without a doubt.

9
OUT OF TEN

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain

Most games cast the player as the good guy, but in this gruesome RPG your character is definately no hero. He's a thirsty vampire. **Amos Wong** licks his lips in anticipation.

PUBLISHER:	Crystal Dynamics
DEVELOPER:	Crystal Dynamics
DISTRIBUTOR:	BMG?
RELEASE:	TBA
PRICE:	TBA
GAME TYPE:	RPG
DIFFICULTY:	Average
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+ (TBA)



Hacking up the locals may seem a bit unfair, but hey, they deserve it. Besides, they killed you once and keep trying to do it again. Take no pity upon them!

It's not much fun to see your character, Kain, get murdered by a bunch of thugs within the first 30 seconds of starting a game, but that's exactly what happens in *Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen*. You need not worry, though, for Kain is given a second chance when he is resurrected as a vampire by the Necromancer Mortimus. Your job is to initially help Kain take revenge upon those who've slain him, but it soon becomes apparent that there's a greater quest at hand in which Kain is destined to partake. The ensuing journey takes you through Nosgoth's dangerous terrain populated by humans brandishing deadly weapons and legions of fearsome undead creatures, to the ultimate clash against the most powerful dark forces of the land. To survive and succeed, Kain will have to accumulate a variety of magic powers and weapons, learn the mystical art of changing into other forms and, of course, feed upon the blood of the living!

The game immediately draws you into its world by the use of computer generated cinematic sequences and some well-acted narration to set the scene. Like many RPG's which have graced the 16-bit systems, the game is viewed from above. While the graphics are hardly impressive when seen next to the likes of *Tomb Raider*, the level of detail packed into the environment is nothing short of astounding. The interior and subterranean areas are soaked in atmosphere, eerily lit by flickering torches which bathe you in patches of orange light and you're never sure of what may be lurking in the shadows.

Switches have to be triggered to gain access to other rooms. Sometimes they are hidden in dark or inaccessible areas, in which case you have to figure out how to activate them. Watch out for traps and nasties too!

Kain's appearance in the game has a satisfying 3D feel, even more so when the moody lighting reflects off his armour. His animation is also very smooth, this is especially apparent when he swings his sword in battle. The various enemies, whether they be human or supernatural, are also fantastically realised - they bleed well, too!

Sometimes a new spell can be found to aide your progress through the section you're exploring and orbs can be picked up that will build up energy to put your new-found powers to use. These include the ability to possess humans (great for when you need a sacrificial victim), a light spell which allows you to navigate those dark rooms and an energy bolt that blows foes into a zillion bits. Other objects to pick up include a variety of weapons for hand to hand combat and a range of projectiles which reduce enemies to satisfyingly gruesome pulps

of various colours!

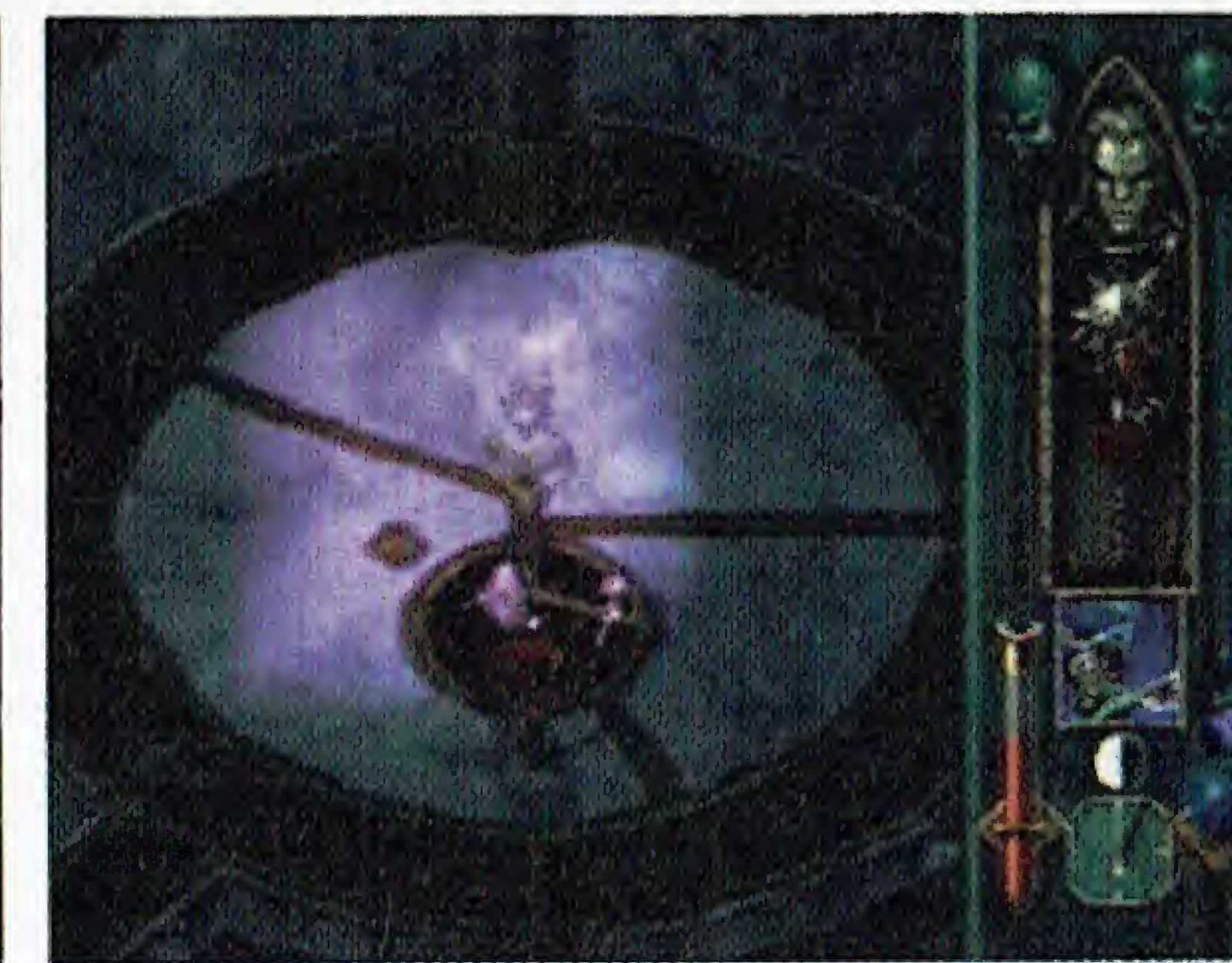
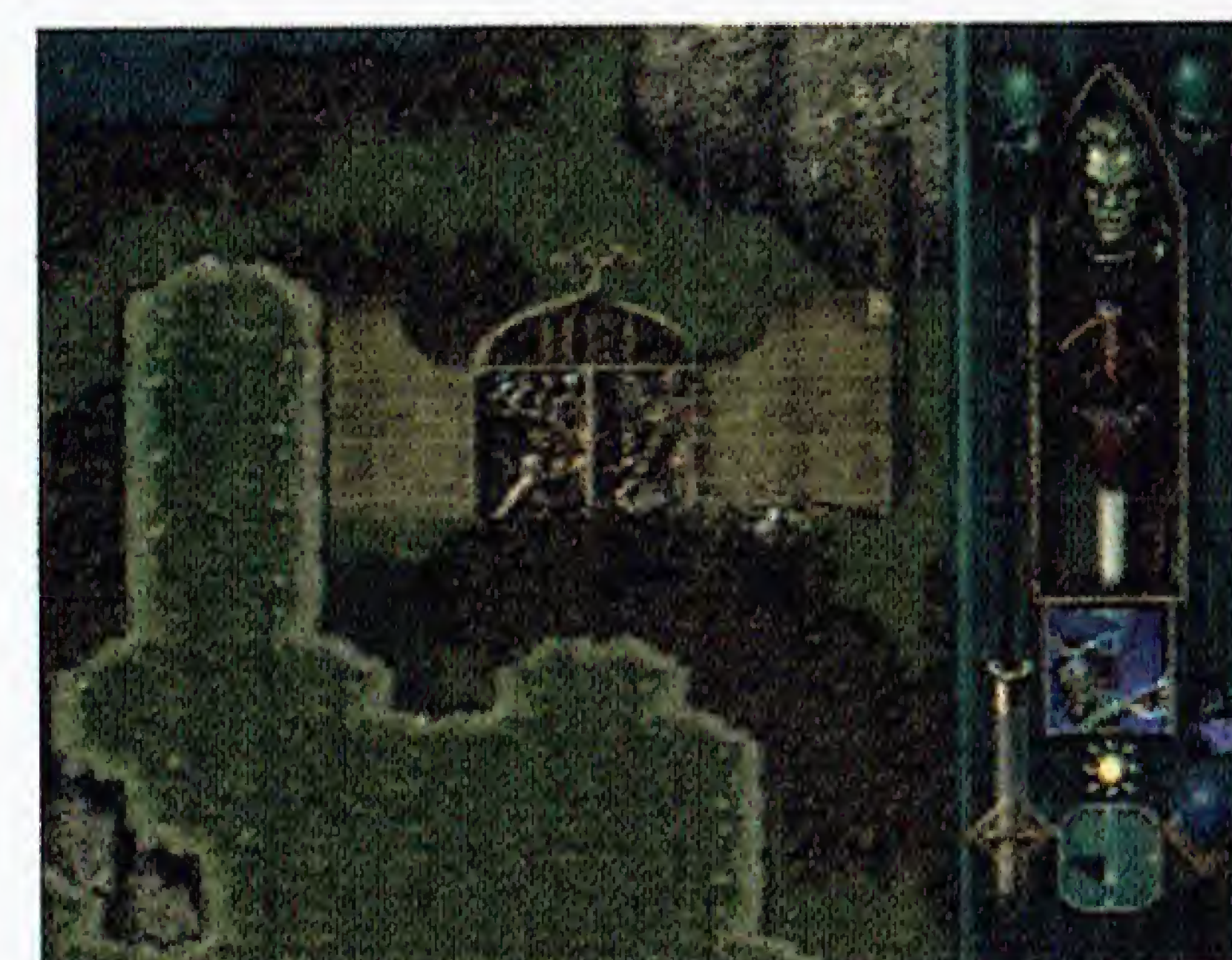
A number of locations can be found which enable Kain to gain new objects at a cost. Blood fountains, for example, can be harmful if used too often, and spirit forges exchange items for Kain's blood, so just make sure that you have an ample supply before you start donating. Audio and visual vista points scattered around provide various clues, teleporters zap you across the land in a flash and bat beacons enable you to travel long distances by air once activated. Of course, you have to find the objects that will let you transform into the other guises first. The wolf and mist forms are best for jumping over obstacles, getting up to higher areas and passing through solid obstacles that lie in your path. Another transformation enables Kain to pass himself off as a human.

The sound and music are very impressive and play a big part in developing the atmosphere of the game, and the voice actors have done a great job with the speech. The music suits the atmosphere perfectly with its pulsating beat, creepy choral bits and overall sombre chords. Best of all are the sound effects - Kain's sword slices the air with a satisfying whoosh of metal, his collisions with skeletons cause the boney fellows to explode with a bang (and a bit of damage to Kain), spells burst foes with a chunky effect and each slaying brings forth a death rattle that will have you grinning like a Ghoul!

So how well does *Legacy of Kain* stand up to the stiff competition posed by the 3D RPG's? Generally quite well. It's biggest problem, however, is the



You want gore? This game has bucket loads of it! Check out the especially gruesome rendered intro.



Viewed from above, you spend most of the time wandering around hacking and slashing anything that gets in your way. Kain is a dead man on a mission!



Although the graphics are for the most part small and non-descript, there is the occasional scene that will stop you in your tracks for a closer look.

time it takes for the different rooms and various option and items screens to load up. While it's only a few seconds, it really disrupts the flow of the game, especially when you take a peek in one room and decide to go back to the previous room that's on another screen. When you consider that the action in *Tomb Raider* occurs seamlessly during an entire level and Lara's various items can be accessed in a jiffy, it's a real handicap - you simply don't want any breaks when you're immersed in an engrossing situation. Slowdown is very apparent at times but must be accepted should you decide to play in the zoom-out view which shows a greater area of your surroundings, and you will need to

do so when formulating an attack strategy in a room full of enemies. In such cases the slow motion effect is very frustrating.

Despite its shortcomings, *Legacy of Kain* is tremendous fun. For one, being a vampire, changing forms and bleeding your victims dry is a real hoot! The storyline is helped along by the speech and the cut scenes, and becomes even more engrossing as you play and discover the epic proportions of the game. There are enemies galore and while initially they're few in numbers and not particularly smart, later on the sheer number of them, their increased aggression and the different spells that some unleash upon you take the combat

to frantic heights in the vein of *Command & Conquer*. The choices of spells and weapons are not superficial, as they handle some enemies better than others, requiring you to use brains as well as brawn to get through.

Ultimately, this game will appeal to those familiar with the classic RPG style and who will welcome the massive improvements *Kain* has over its predecessors. For those weaned on the new generation of 3D RPG's such as *Resident Evil*, it will probably take a bit more convincing. Although you may initially be repelled by the small graphics, *Legacy of Kain* can be a thoroughly absorbing adventure given half a chance.



Kain can morph into a bat to cover distances, a human to pass freely among the townsfolk, or a wolf to jump levels (right). "Bring out yer dead!" (right)

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	Nice, but looks too much like a 16-bit game
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Excellent use of voices and moody music, but a tad repeditive
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Slick production but poor execution. Plays like a Megadrive game
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★★	A massive quest, but too much wandering from place to place
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Not many games like this on the PlayStation

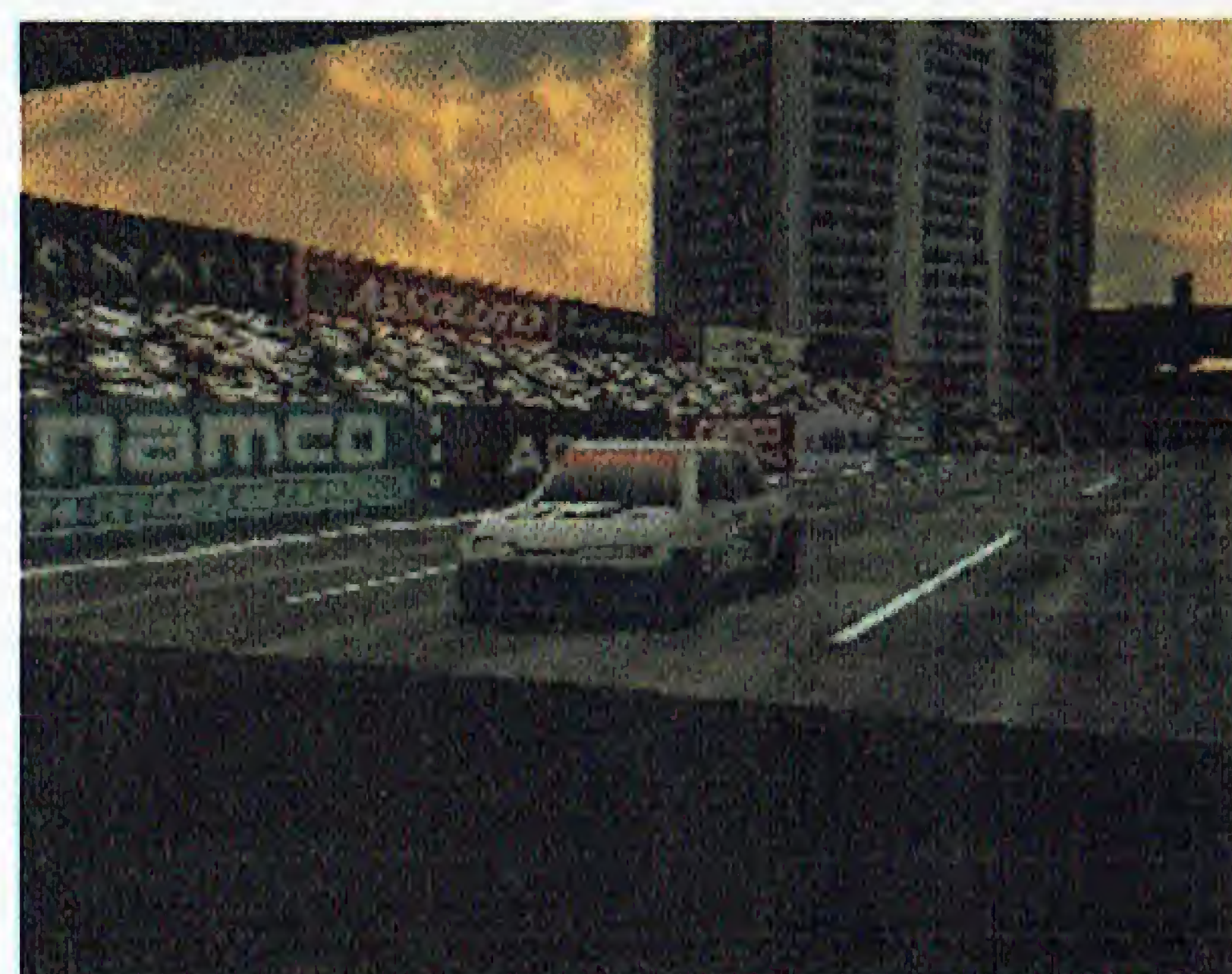
■ OVERALL: An old style of game, but *Legacy of Kain* is an epic gothic quest you can really sink your teeth into. (Sorry...)

7
OUT OF TEN

Rage Racer

"Mr Iredale, where did you get this car?" "I was just issued it. I took it for a test drive and went straight through a crowd at the dispersal centre." "Oh, that's terrible!"

PUBLISHER:	Namco
DEVELOPER:	Namco
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	May
PRICE:	TBA
GAME TYPE:	Racing
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Supports Negcon
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	G (TBA)



"No, it was wonderful because I only hit an eleven-fourteen!" *Rage Racer* is more of an updated version of *Ridge Racer* than a new game in its own right.

Alternatives

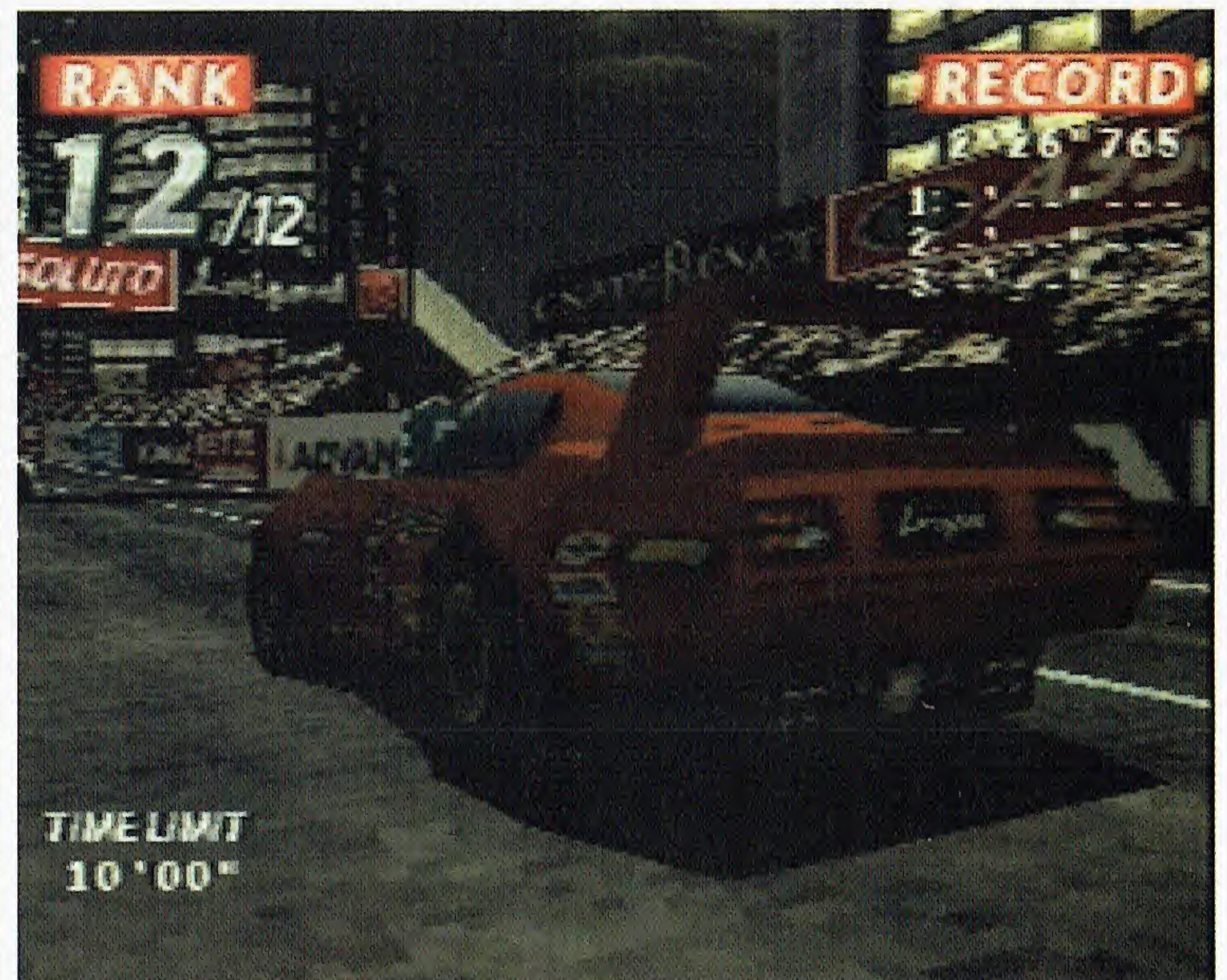
Rage Racer is remarkably similar to its forebearers *Ridge Racer* and *RR Revolution*.

Ridge Racer was one of the most important games at the time of the PlayStation's launch. It was the first time gamers could take home a high-end arcade game that was, for all intents and purposes, a perfect translation. It had everything an arcade game needed to be successful: fast, colourful graphics and a quick adrenaline rush for casual participants and seasoned racers alike. It was one of those games in which you could endlessly speed around the track trying to shave mere hundredths of a second off your best lap times. The handling and performance of the cars was designed especially for the narrow,

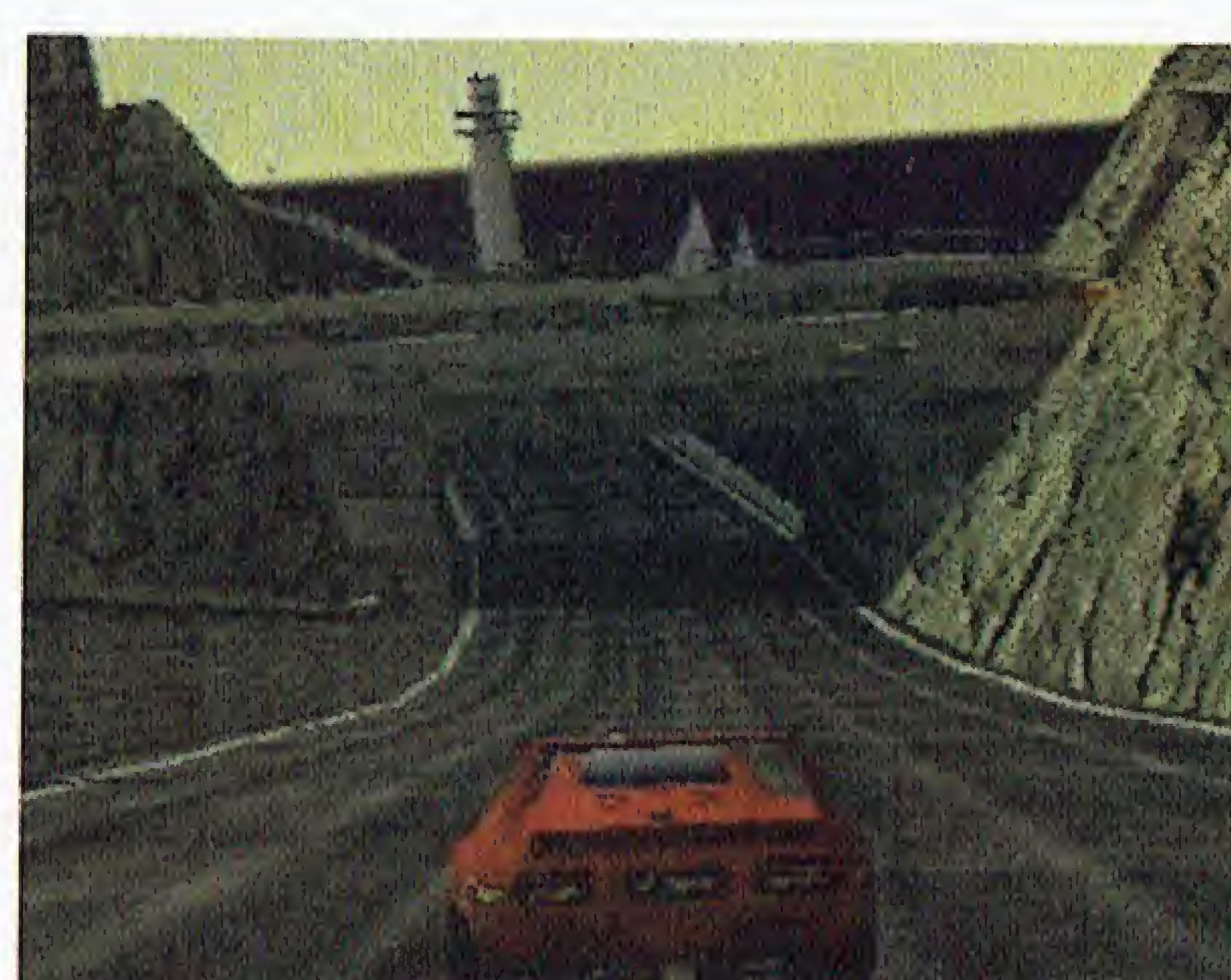
twisting circuit they raced upon and the exaggerated power-slides were an integral part of the game.

Last year, a sequel hit the PlayStation entitled *Ridge Racer Revolution*. It was basically a make-over of the original with new tracks and faster, smoother gameplay. It was good, but didn't really offer anything new, so some fans felt a bit let down. Now we've got the third game in the series and it promises a number of significant upgrades, in particular more cars and the ability to add after-market enhancements to them. But are they enough to make *Rage Racer* a new game? Or is it just another sequel?

Let's first take a look at the circuits, of which there are four (plus mirrored & reverse versions). The first track is reasonably short and easy, with a few hills and jumps. The second is a lot more demanding on both driver and car. It's full of very steep hills which require you to constantly work through the gears to keep the engine revs at an optimum level. The third track has a lot of long, sweeping bends punctuated with a few nasty hair-pin turns, while the fourth track is simply an oval designed purely for maximum speed. While this may sound quite varied, in practice they come across as being very similar, partly because the graphics are the same



"That is wonderful!" "No, it was terrible. I lost both my arms." Buying upgrades not only makes your car go faster, you also get cool over-sized spoilers!



"Oh, that's terrible!" "No, it was wonderful, wonderful! Because my hand, it was paralysed anyway!"

throughout all of them. Each track shares a common start/finish straight and the graphics in each keep to the same style. The bright, rich hues of the past games have been replaced with a darker, more gritty appearance. Dirty grey and brown textures are predominant as the roads wind between cliffs for much of their duration. Many stretches of tracks are edged with grass, but don't attempt to take short cuts across it or you'll come to an abrupt halt. Banging into the invisible track-side barriers is just as much of a problem as it was in the other games and is still just as annoying.

While the tracks are long and varied, in my opinion none of them are as interesting or as fun as the original *Ridge Racer* Expert Course. There's only really three different situations you have to deal with; long straights, sweeping corners which sometimes require a touch on the brakes; and sharp turns you have to power-slide around. Where are the narrow chicanes? Where are the dips and subtle variations in the track surface? Once you've learnt a track's layout, the only thing that stops you from reeling off

perfect lap after perfect lap is contact with the computer controlled cars. They are bad drivers, make no mistake about it. They never take the same smooth line you do, and often swerve into your car without seeming to make any attempt at avoiding a collision. This makes passing them more of a relief than an accomplishment to be proud of.

By now you're probably thinking "Hmmm... This *Rage Racer* doesn't sound very good at all", but to be fair we must mention its good points, and it does indeed have a few. You start with a fairly crappy car that doesn't go very fast at all, but in Grade 1 the competition is even slower. Disappointing as this lack of pace may at first seem, it provides the perfect learning curve, so by the time you get to Grade 5 and have the really fast cars, you know the tracks inside out.

As you progress and win races, you receive prize money which is used to purchase new cars or upgrade the one you have. The nice thing is that you can keep racing on your favourite track and winning more money to buy faster cars. Needless to say, a memory card is necessary if you want to keep your good

cars, but oddly enough the race and lap records are not stored, which seems particularly stupid in this sort of game.

The *Ridge Racer* games have always been about speed, and in this respect *Rage Racer* doesn't disappoint. Once you've souped up your choice of automobile (we recommend super-charging the Team Lizard truck) you can really start to burn rubber. Going through the tunnels at warp speed produces a strobing effect equalled only in *Wipeout 2097*.

If you are a big fan of *Ridge Racer*, you'll definitely want to check this game out. Yes, it's more of the same, but for many *RR* fans, that will be more than enough of a recommendation. Of course, if you don't like *Ridge Racer* then there's no point in getting this. When it's good, it's very, very good, but when it's bad it can really piss you off. If only you didn't lose all your momentum when you graze the side of the track or get shunted by another car, *Rage Racer* would have been great. As it stands, though, it's just too unforgiving to make it really enjoyable for new players, but if you liked the other *RR* games you will love this. For a while.



Rage Racer has one of the slickest intros we've ever seen. I know we always say that, but we really mean it!



The after race replay is the only time you get a good look at the cars racing. Check out the super charger upgrade popping out of the hood (left).

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Nice backgrounds and car designs, but it's a bit drab...
■ SOUND:	★★★	Slick pop-techno tunes you'll either love or hate. Average effects
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Fast and responsive, but very frustrating at times
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	You'll play it heaps at first, but after a while may lose interest
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★	A few nice features, but nothing new

■ OVERALL: *Rage Racer* is a very fast and slick game, but it still has many of the flaws that made the previous *Ridge Racer* games so frustrating. Good, but an essential purchase only for *RR* fans. No two-player mode!

7
OUT OF TEN

Twisted Metal World Tour

Adrian Bertram has never driven a car in his life, but he's watched plenty of Steve McQueen movies. In preparation for his attempt to get a learner's permit, we put him in the Twisted Metal driving simulator.

PUBLISHER:	Sony
DEVELOPER:	Single Trac
DISTRIBUTION:	Sony
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Carnage
DIFFICULTY:	Medium
PLAYERS:	One or two
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Passwords
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



The new *Twisted Metal* game improves upon the original with more cars, more explosions and more wanton violence and destruction. It's also fun to play!

The original *Twisted Metal* game was one of the initial releases for the PlayStation. While it had the right idea, it didn't really deliver the sort of thrills many players had hoped it would. The one player game wasn't really successful, and the game overall was a bit slow and awkward. With the release of *Twisted Metal World Tour* however, the producers have addressed a lot of the problems from the previous game and as a result it is one of the most entertaining games to appear for a while.

As with the first game, *World Tour* is based on a simple yet highly rewarding philosophy: Crush, Kill, Destroy. If your idea of fun on wheels is endlessly speeding around a bunch of closed

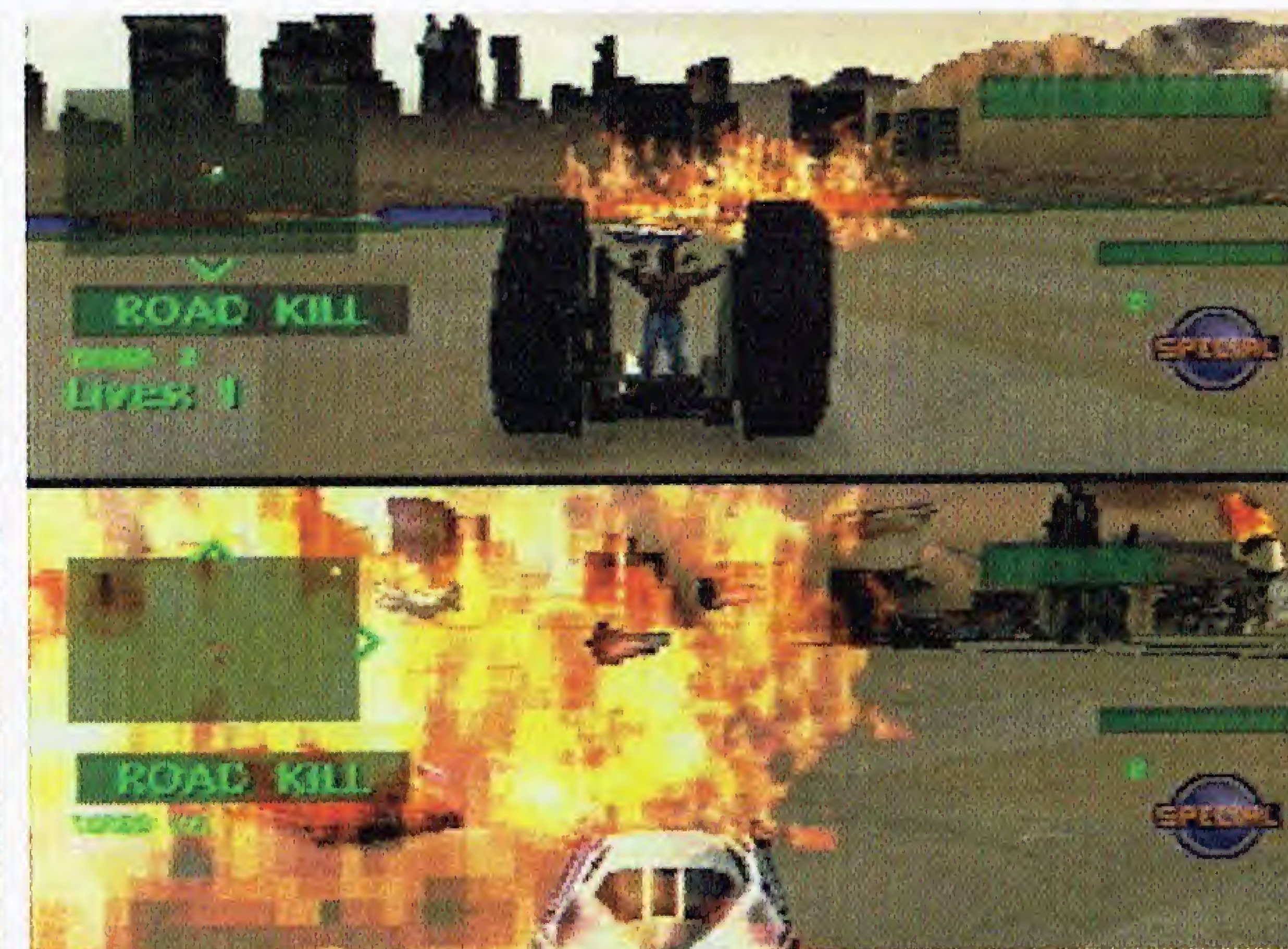
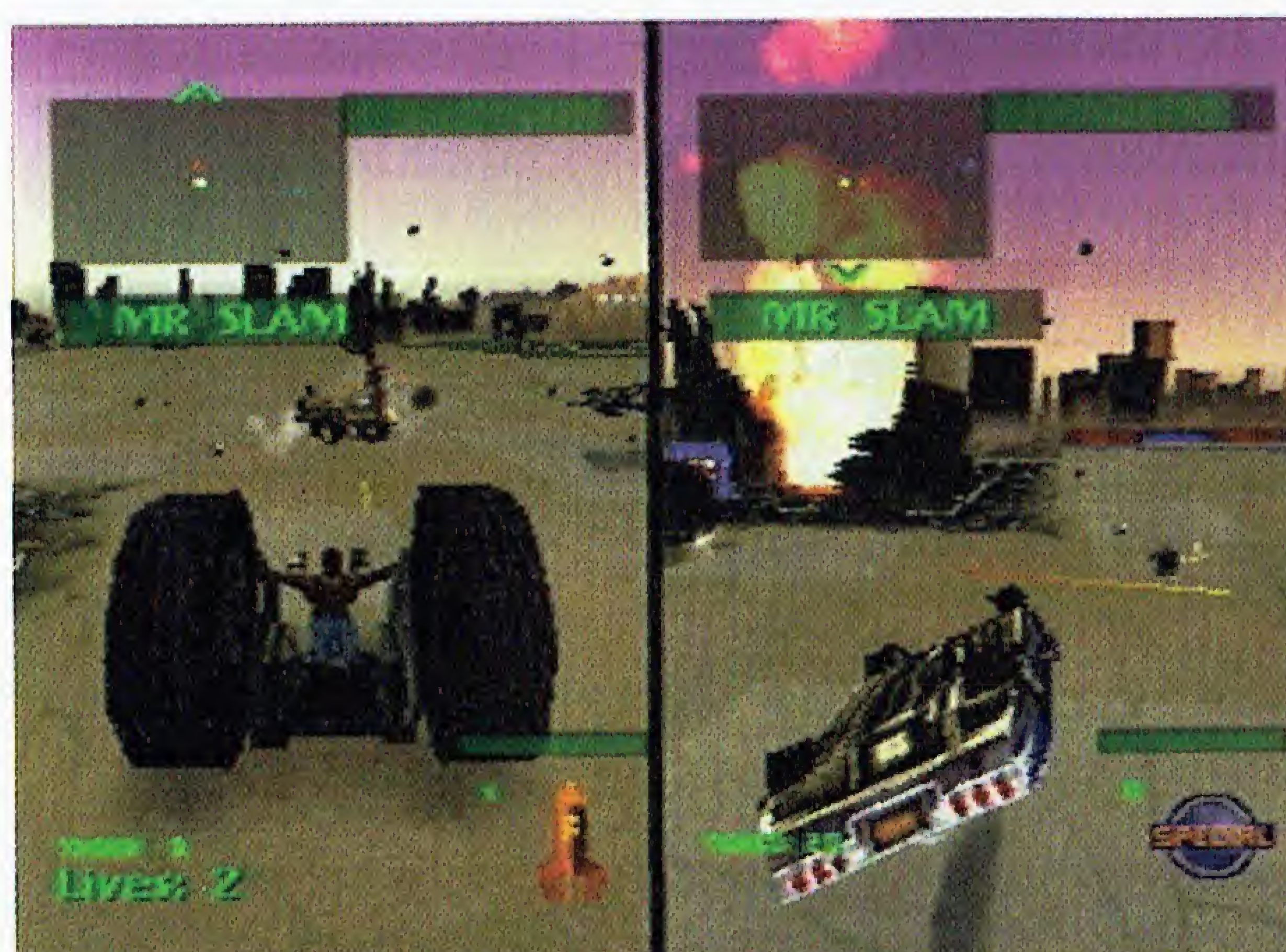
circuits, then perhaps you should go and have a nap now. Here there is no race as such, just a collection of wild and crazy vehicles attempting to blow the snot out of each other across a host of international battle zones.

The story behind the game (as much as there is) revolves around the plans of would-be world dominator and all-round psycho Calypso, who wishes to stage a second *Twisted Metal* tournament to wreak revenge upon whoever scratched his paint in the car pack. Or something. With the City of Angles lying in ruins after the first tournament, he has decided to make the globe his wrecking yard and invited a number of similarly psychotic drivers to take part in the carnage.

While one player action was less than rewarding in the first game, that is not the case here. Opponents are now far more devious and will make sneak attacks, team up against you, steal your power-ups and generally drive you insane. As you progress through the different stages in the tournament, your opponents become more ruthless and come in greater numbers. The Holland stage, for example, is a tiny tulip field packed with a total of nine opponents out for your blood - there's nowhere to run and nowhere to hide - so surviving here for any length of time is a feat to be proud of. Furthermore, there are a couple of well 'ard bosses to deal with every few levels, and you'll have to play strategically if you don't want your



Believe it or not, there's actually a plot to this game!



There are two split-screen modes which you can choose between. The verticle split is good for long, narrow streets, horizontal is better for open areas.



The various leves are all very different in layout and require different tactics to survive. Visit foreign countries, admire their national treasures and then destroy them (top right).

metal to be twisted, so to speak.

The strength of such competitive games like this is how well they stand up over time, and the best way to increase this sort of game's longevity is to include a multi-player facility. *World Tour* complies in this area and offers a choice between horizontal and vertical split-screen action. Most players will find the horizontal split more comfortable and familiar, but the vertical split does work well in stages such as Hong Kong, where the roads tend to be long, narrow and with a wall of buildings on either side. Either way, you can change it to suit your preference, even in the middle of a match.

Regardless of your viewpoint, the graphics are colourful and varied. The different arenas are well detailed and the design of the stages has been brilliantly conceived. There are oodles of secret areas and teleport points that warp you to unusual places. Much of the scenery is interactive in that things can be destroyed to give you access to further areas. Our favourite moment has to be when you drop a time bomb at the base of the Eiffel Tower, then drive back to get a good view of it exploding - the top half falls down to create a bridge to the rooftops of all the buildings in the stage, thus providing a whole new level of combat!

Although the cars may feel rather

sloppy and over responsive at first, once you remind yourself that this isn't a driving game, you can begin to appreciate them for what they are - death and destruction on wheels. After getting used to their handling, you'll find yourself quite at ease, and there are a variety of controller configurations to suit everyone anyway.

Each car comes equipped with unlimited machine guns and you can pick up various types of missiles, bombs, and so forth along the way. In addition, each vehicle has a unique special weapon. These range from salvos of missiles to other less conventional weapons. Mr Slam, the front end loader, picks up his foes and repeatedly smashes them against the ground (but you've got to get in close). The Formula 1 car, Twister, lives up to its name and

creates a mini-tornado that sucks opponents up into its vortex and spits them out. Axel, the freak strapped between two massive tractor tyres, unleashes a localised nuclear blast!

The sound throughout this game is a mixed affair. Some of the music is really quite woeful, but the sound effects, explosions and general noises of carnage almost obscure it. Still, it fits in well with the somewhat tacky theme of the game.

Twisted Metal World Tour is a surprisingly well rounded and enjoyable game. While it initially looks and plays in a slightly dodgy manner, these apparent short comings soon prove to be insubstantial and don't infringe upon the fun at all. And fun is what this game is all about. It's got cars, guns and explosions. What more could you want? (In a video game, you sad fool!)

Alternatives

There really isn't anything which compares with this unique game. *Destruction Derby 2* has plenty of carnage, but no guns or explosions. *Twisted Metal World Tour* it is, then.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	The scrolling is a bit jerky, but the game generally looks good
■ SOUND:	★★★	Silly music and loud, noisy effects. Quite suitable
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Fast destructive action that leaves a grin from ear to ear
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	Addictive and reasonably challenging. Two player mode - joy!
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	An obvious concept, but one that's rarely presented this well

■ OVERALL: *Twisted Metal World Tour* offers highly entertaining mindless action, yet has enough depth and variety to sustain lengthy sessions of carnage in one or two player mode.

9
OUT OF TEN

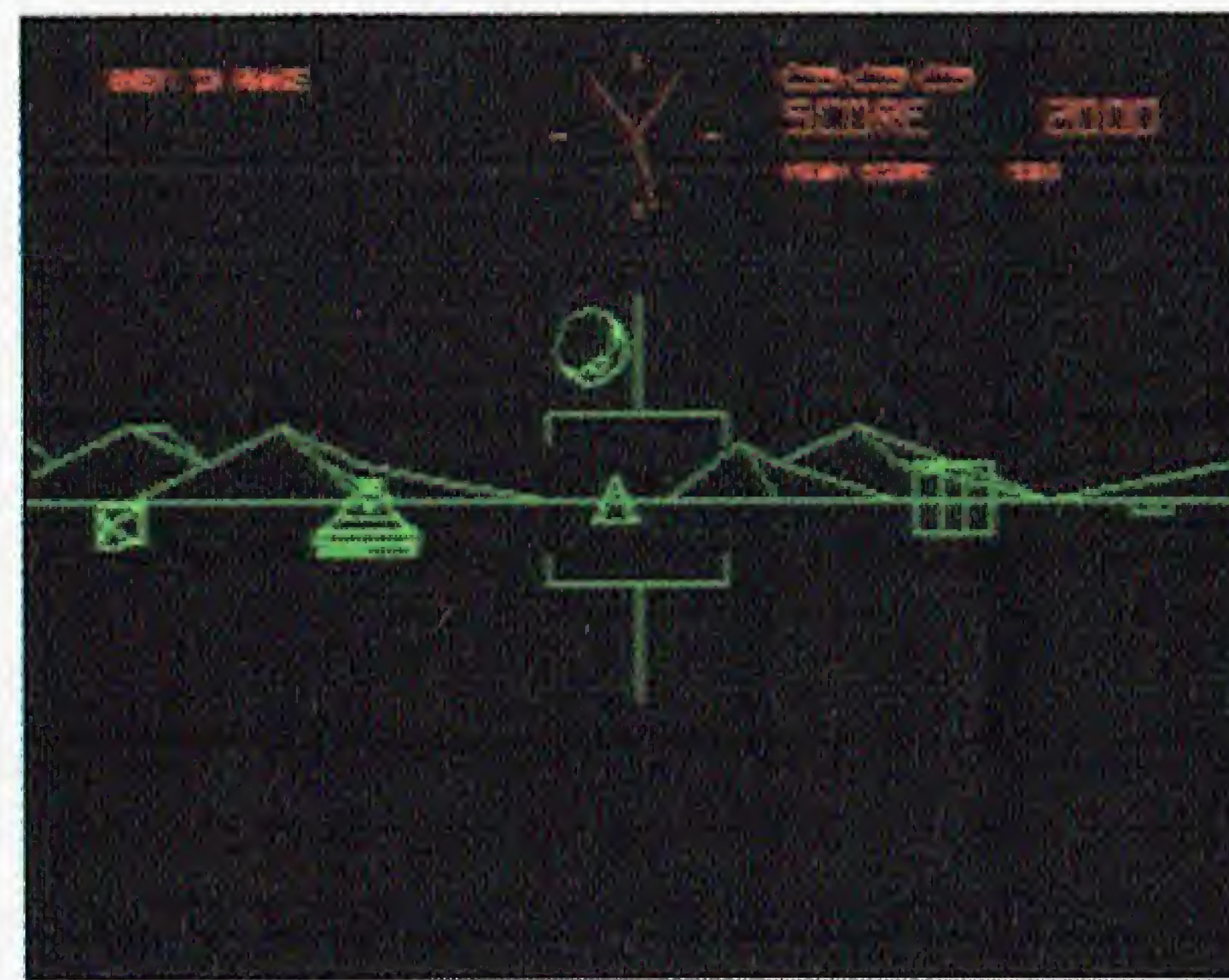
Arcade's Greatest Hits: Atari

Nick Smith has a nostalgic chuckle as the Atari Collection Vol. 1 presents six retro blasts on one disk for the PlayStation

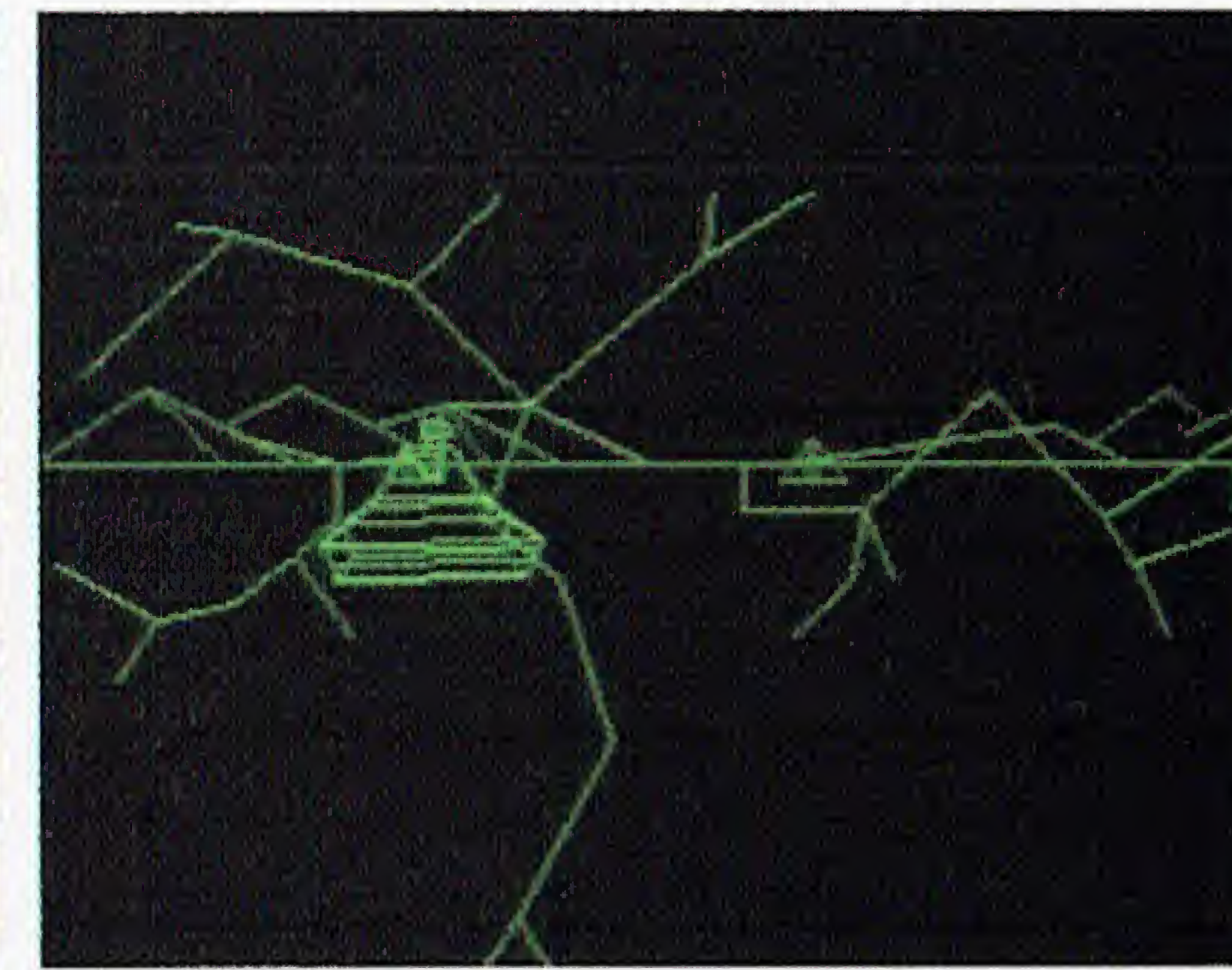
PUBLISHER:	Midway
DEVELOPER:	Atari
DISTRIBUTION:	GT
RELEASE:	TBA
PRICE:	TBA
GAME TYPE:	Ancient arcade
DIFFICULTY:	Medium to Hard
PLAYERS:	1 to 2
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Not needed
CLASSIFICATION:	TBA



Asteroids. Vector graphics. Mmmm... Minimal.



Battlezone's gameplay paved the way for games like Spectre and Assault Riggs



Cast your mind back to the time when things were much simpler. There was nothing like the video game arcades we know today, only one or two coin-ops at the local milk bar and crowds of kids trying to catch a glimpse of the of what all the whispered buzz was about.

Looking back, those games were terribly exciting, with top graphics, mind blowing sound and, above all, provided hours of fun.

Now you can relive the excitement of an era past from the comfort of your own home thanks to *The Atari Collection Vol. 1*.

Tempest

This strange game has an almost cult following. Its compulsive gameplay and even stranger concept resulted in instant success. As the story goes, monsters are coming up from holes in the ground and it's up to you to destroy them before they come up and drag you in. Armed with a blaster, you dart around the edge of the hole shooting the monsters as they run up the sides. There are many types of baddies that need you to take different strategies to beat them. Shoot them all and get whisked to the next wave. The shape of the holes change and the pace becomes increasingly faster and more furious.

Missile Command

One of the most well known games was *Missile Command*, requiring fast reflexes and perfect timing. Your city is

under attack from the USSR and your mission is to protect your city by aiming your missiles at the incoming ICBMs in the hope the explosion will take them out. Aiming the missiles is done via a cursor that can be directed anywhere above the cities, but take careful aim as you only have a limited supply of ammo. The original arcade version had a track ball to manoeuvre the cursor, so control may seem a little strange at first, but if you have it you can use the PlayStation mouse.

Asteroids

Shoot at the asteroids from your delta shaped spaceship without getting hit. Sounds simple? Almost, but the asteroids then break into smaller pieces which ricochet around the screen even faster. Only by using a well placed shot and the ship's thrusters to dodge the floating rocks will you have a chance. To add an extra challenge, UFOs fly across the top of the screen shooting at you. These can be shot to gain extra points. The original *Asteroids* was one of the first games to use vector graphics and these have been faithfully emulated in this version.

Breakout

This was an early clone of *Pong* - the game which started the whole business rolling. The concept is simple, by controlling a bat at the bottom of the screen you must deflect a ball to bounce it back up to the top and hit a brick. You can control the

angle of the ball to a certain degree by hitting the edge of the bat. To throw in even more of a challenge, hitting bricks eventually frees more balls, and what starts as a simple game quickly becomes one of the most intense few minutes of your life. When you first had an Atari, this was the type of game that sucked your parents in and helped justify the "no more wasting twenties at the milk bar" cry.

Centipede

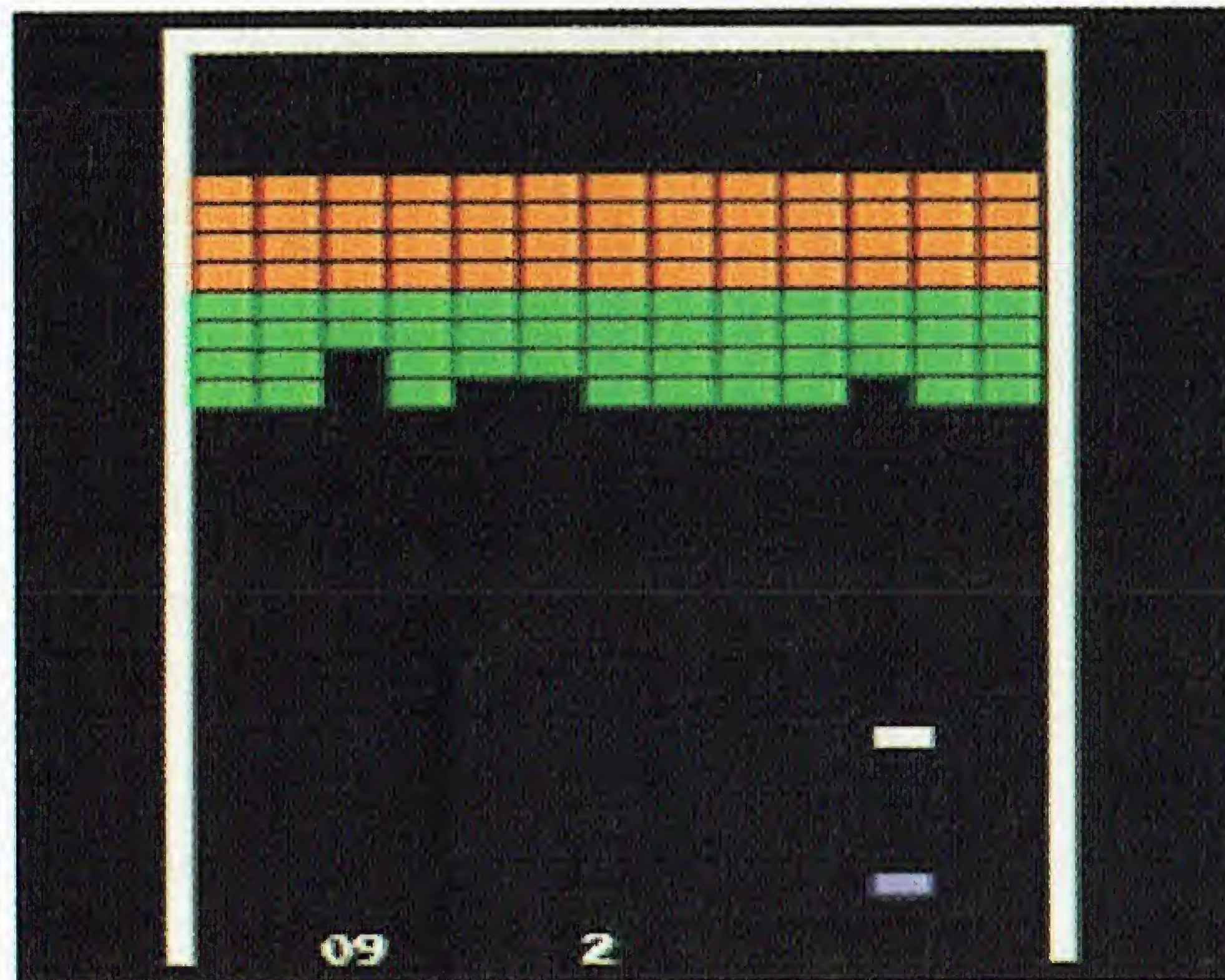
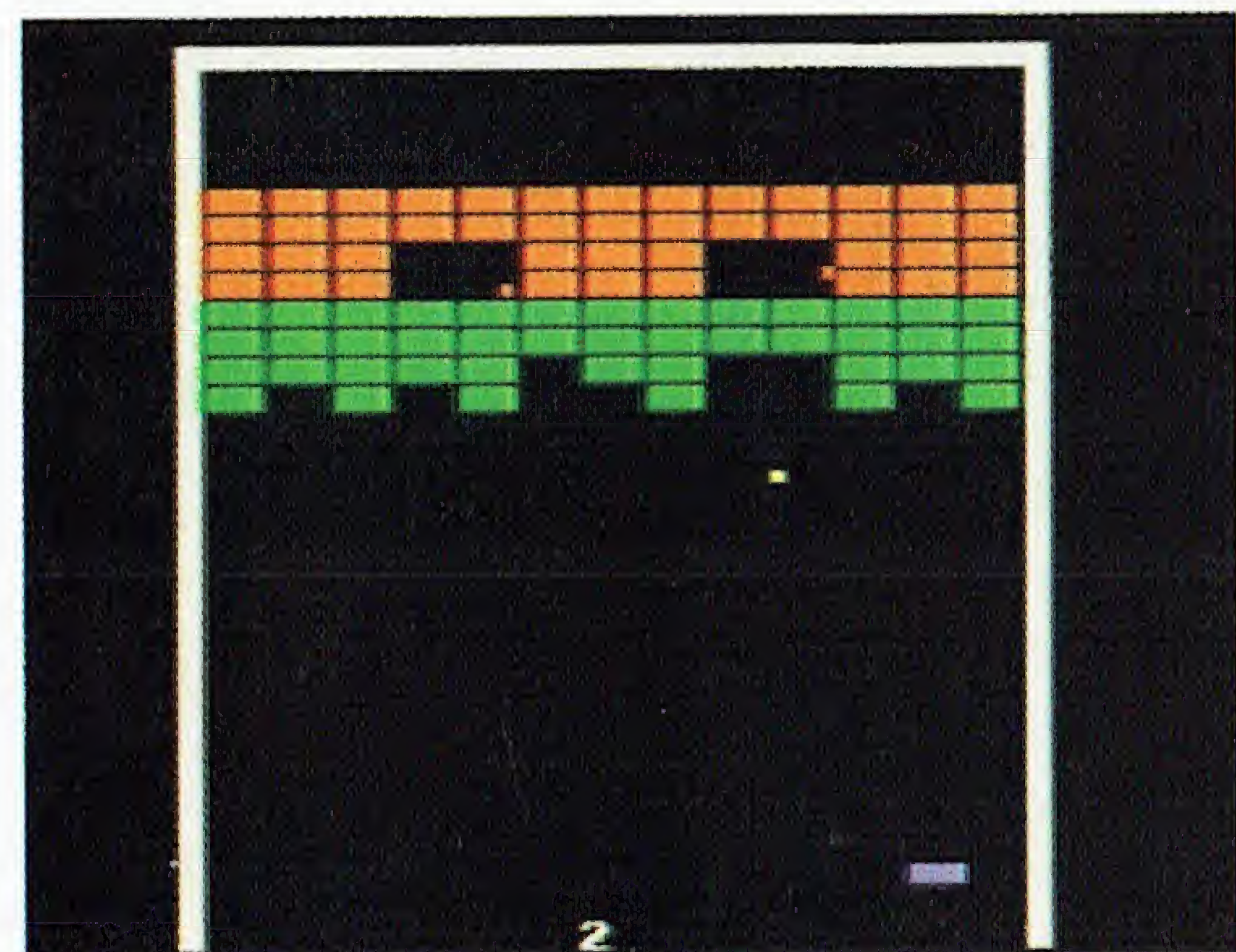
With the player taking on the role of a gardener, the idea of this game was to rid the garden of pests, in this case centipedes. From the bottom of the screen you shoot up at the centipede. When you hit any of its segments, it breaks apart and continues its downward march as smaller centipedes and at an increased pace. The path is blocked by mushrooms and shooting the centipedes only brings more mushrooms onto the screen. Meanwhile, other garden pests get in the way or try to eat you. Spiders, however, act in your favour and give you more room to shoot by eating the mushrooms. A fast, furious action game that originally used a track ball for play, but works well with the joystick.

Battlezone

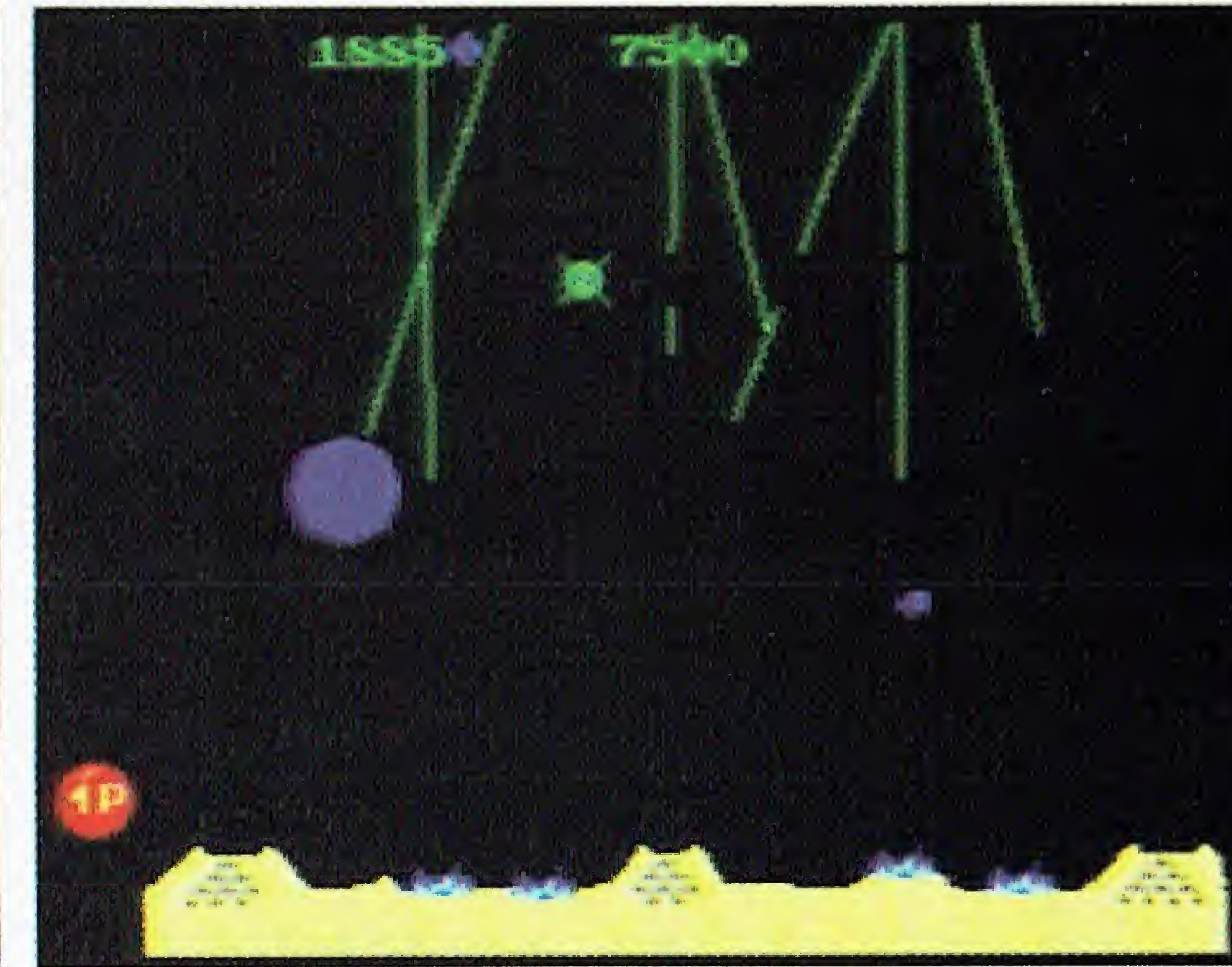
This game was so realistic that at the time the US army had supposedly commissioned Atari to build a custom version for use in training soldiers! Being



The original arcade cabinet and table-top machines, in all their laminated glory. So many memories...

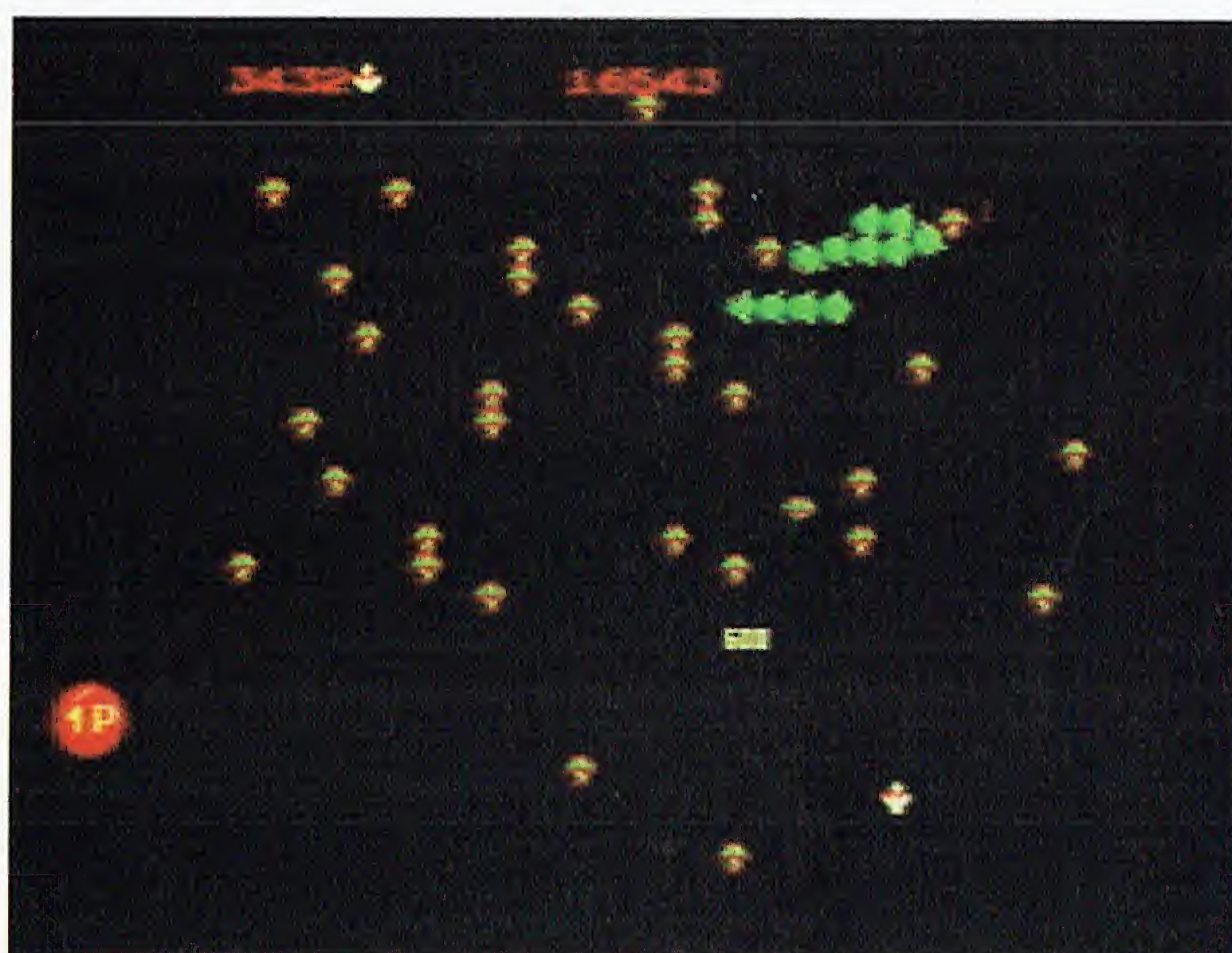


Breakout! If you've got a weak heart, you probably shouldn't play this game.

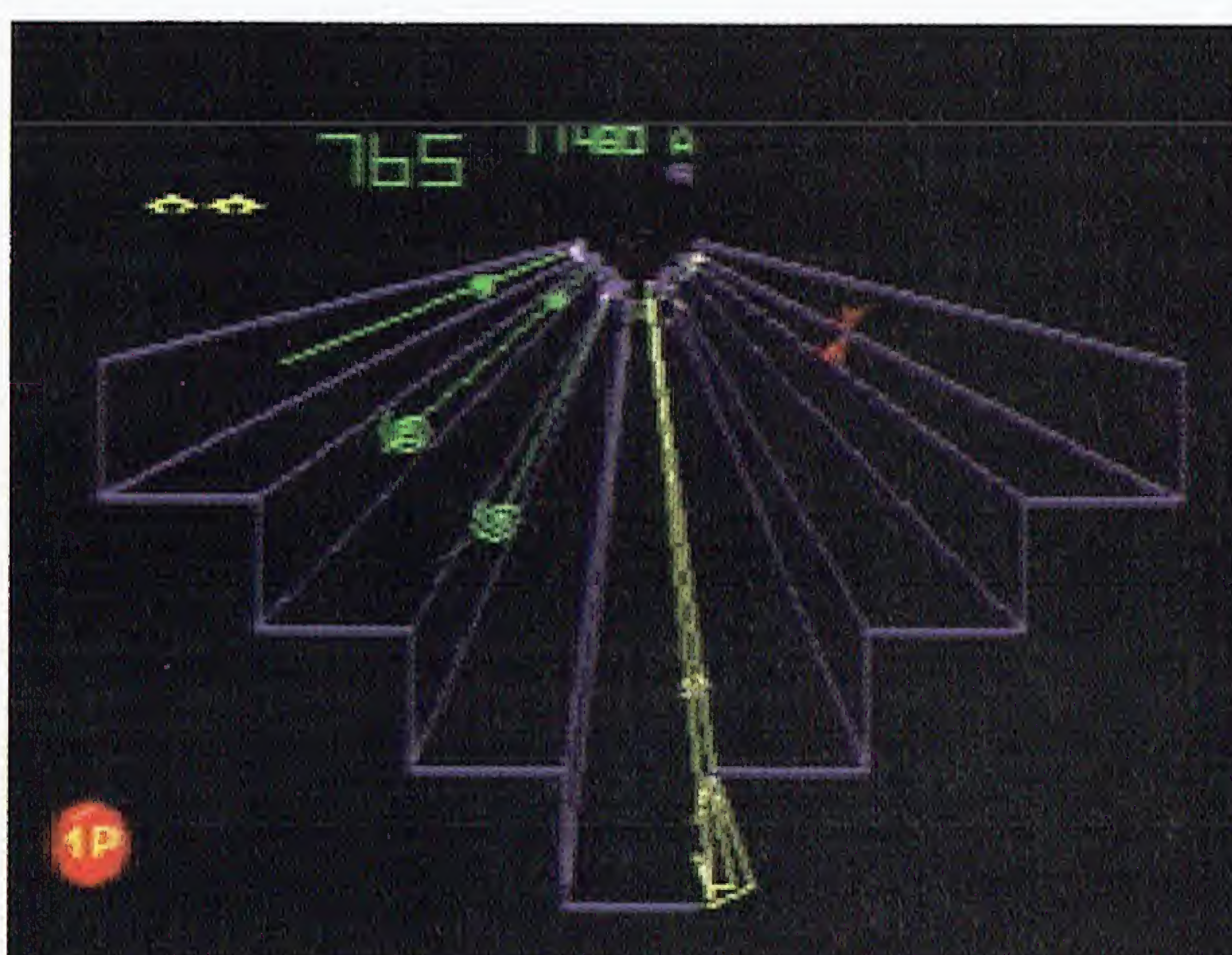


Missile Command... incoming!!

Collection Vol. 1



When I was a kid, I wasted LOADS of money on *Centipede*



Ahh... Ye olde *Tempest* level with steps in it.

the truth or not, it was the first first-person vector graphics game ever made. Manning the gun turret of a tank, the objective is to seek out enemy tanks and blow them up. They frequently shoot back, so driving back and forth while using parts of the landscape as cover is the general strategy. A radar at the top of the screen indicated how many enemies were around and where they were. A challenging game that requires strategy and timing.

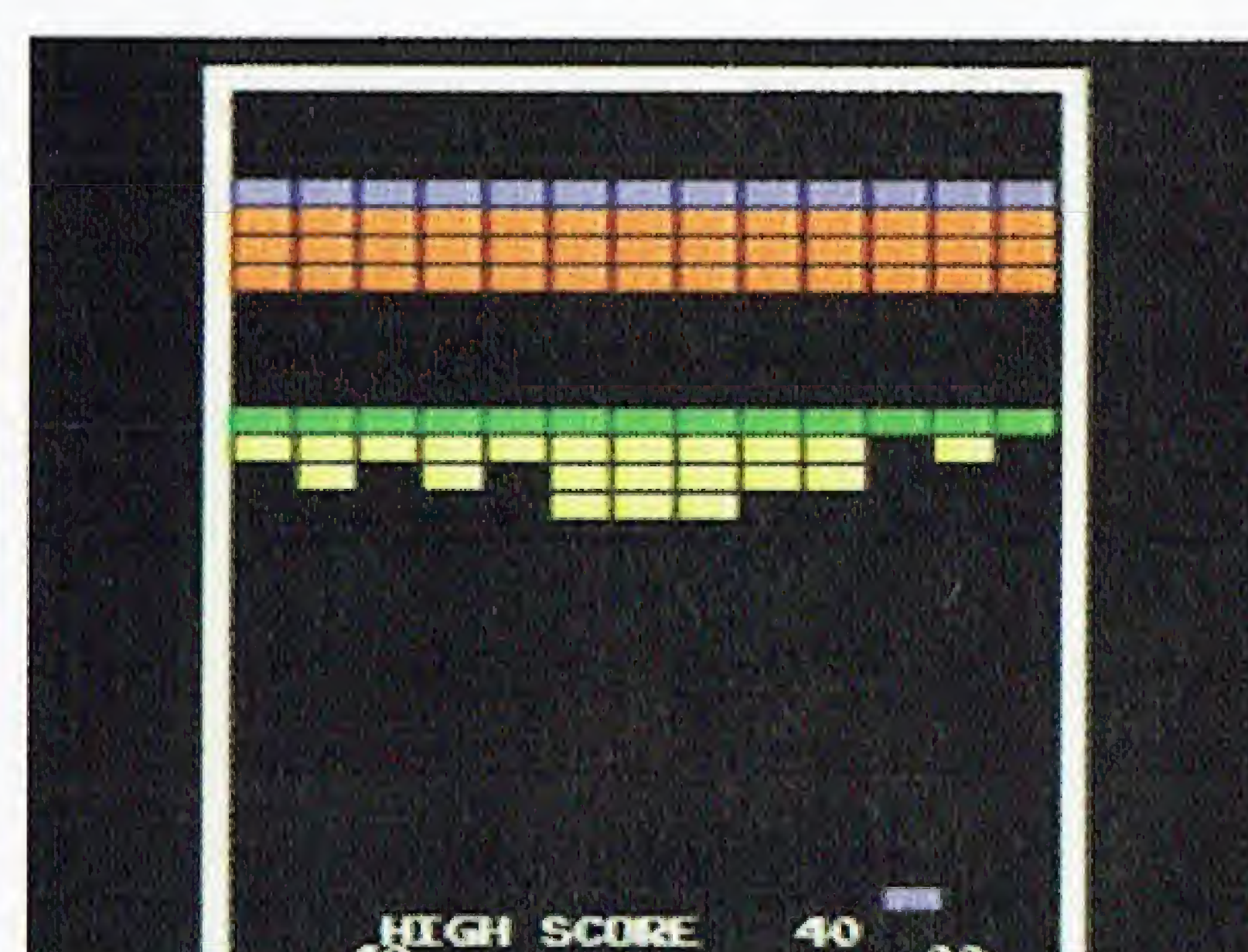
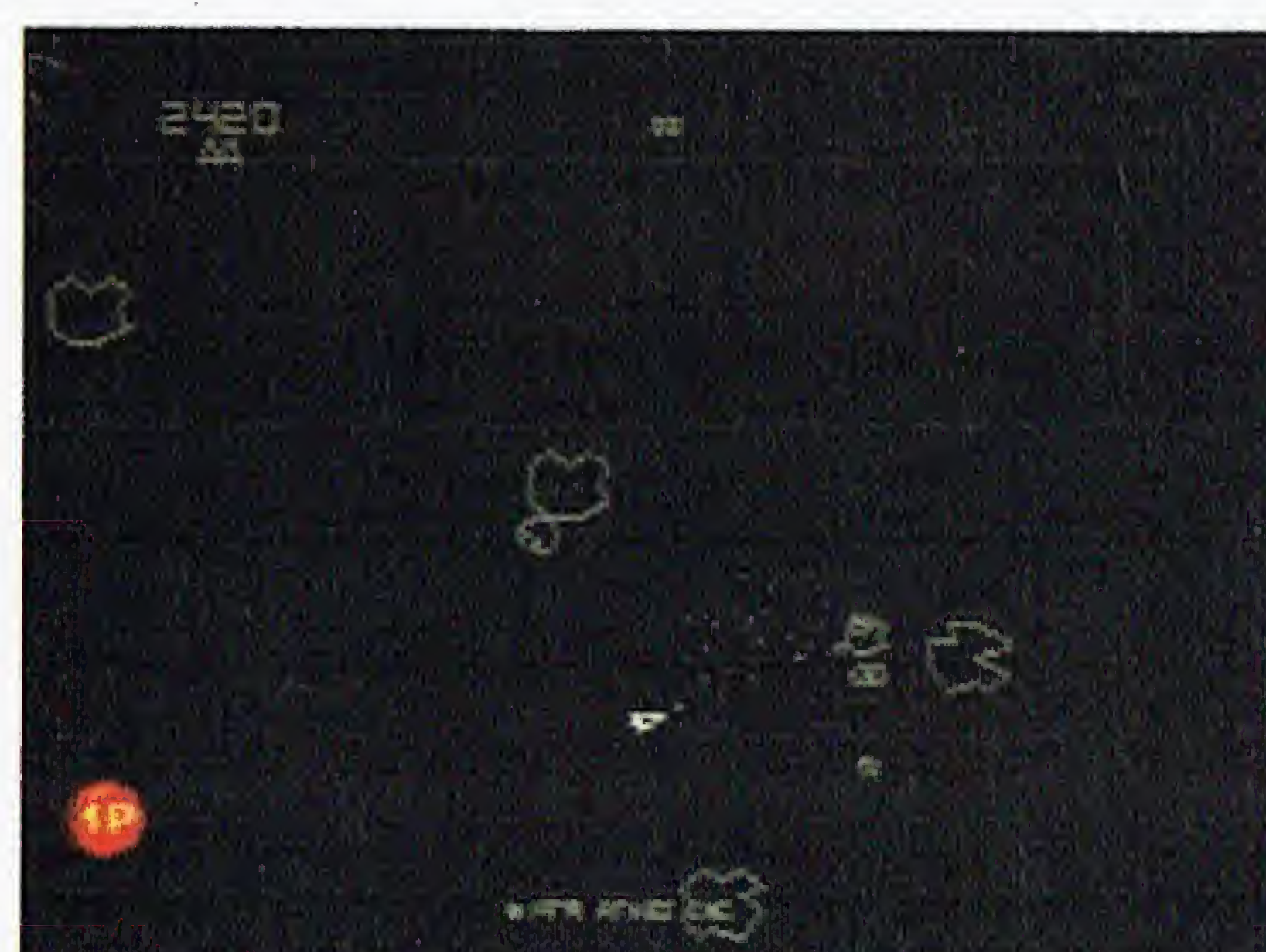
The only thing these versions can't emulate to perfection is the control for each game. From the track-ball used in *Centipede* and *Missile Command*, to dual joysticks for *Battlezone* and the dial used in *Tempest*, the controls have had to be modified to suit the standard PlayStation joypad. That shouldn't put anyone off, though, as the translation has been carried out quite well.

I'm a big nostalgia geek and so I happily recommend this collection to anyone of a similar disposition. History

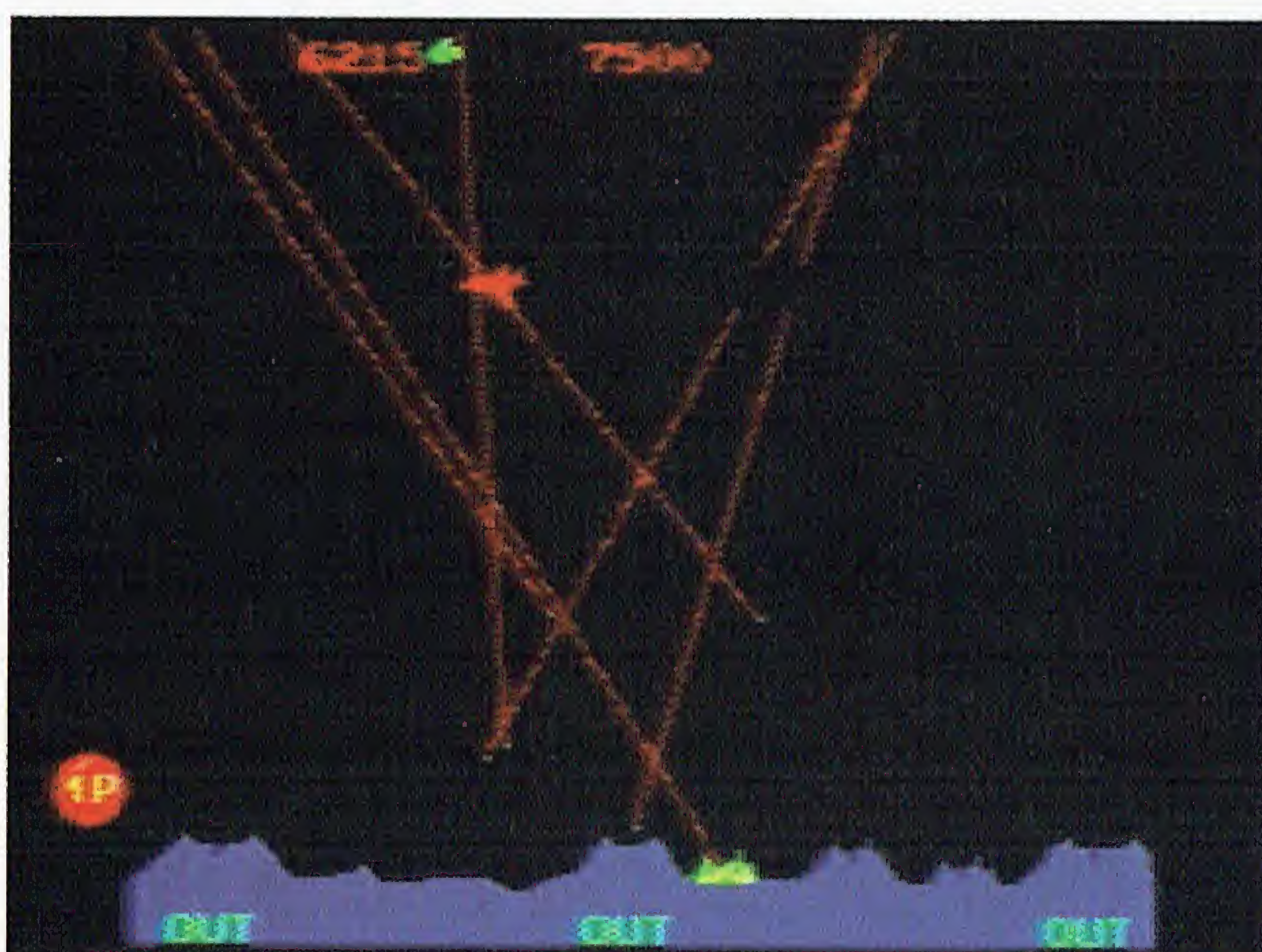
buffs will be thrilled with the accompanying documentary and interviews with the creators of the games. However, despite the appeal these games once had, there isn't a hell of a lot to keep them going other than trying to better your best hi-scores. Hardcore gamers will definitely clock up some serious hours on it, and if you use it as a party game with other geek-minded friends much mirth and merriment can be had. Just make sure you charge them twenty cents a game.



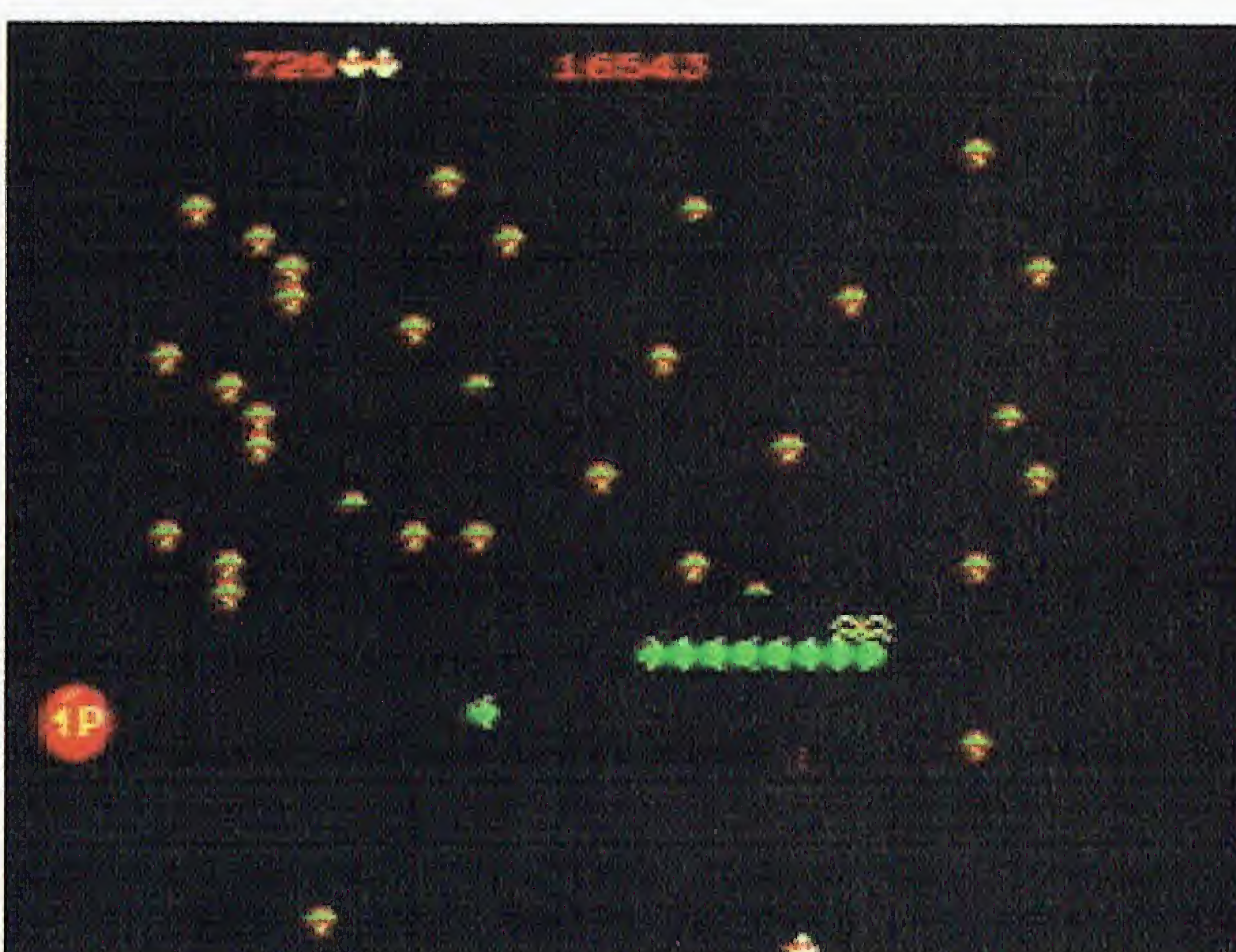
The old vector graphics in these games have more style than every contemporary game put together. Well...



When I was just a lad my Granddaddy had *Asteroids* you know... every time he went to the bathroom...



Thats a hit! So much for your *Missile Command*



Did I ever tell you about when I was a kid... I spent LOADS of money...

Alternatives

Retro freaks in search of archaic thrills should also check out *William's Arcade Classics* or, for an Eastern perspective, the *Namco Museum Volumes 1 to 3*.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	Dare we say, "arcade perfect"
■ SOUND:	★★	All the beeps and blips you remember and yes, they're still pretty bad
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	Compulsive entertainment, but the games don't go anywhere
■ LIFESPAN:	★★	If beating hi-scores turns you on, these games will fill your pants!
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★★	Hey, these are the originals!

■ OVERALL: Probably the best collection of truly classic games money can buy. But try to think of how often you'll actually play them.

6
OUT OF TEN

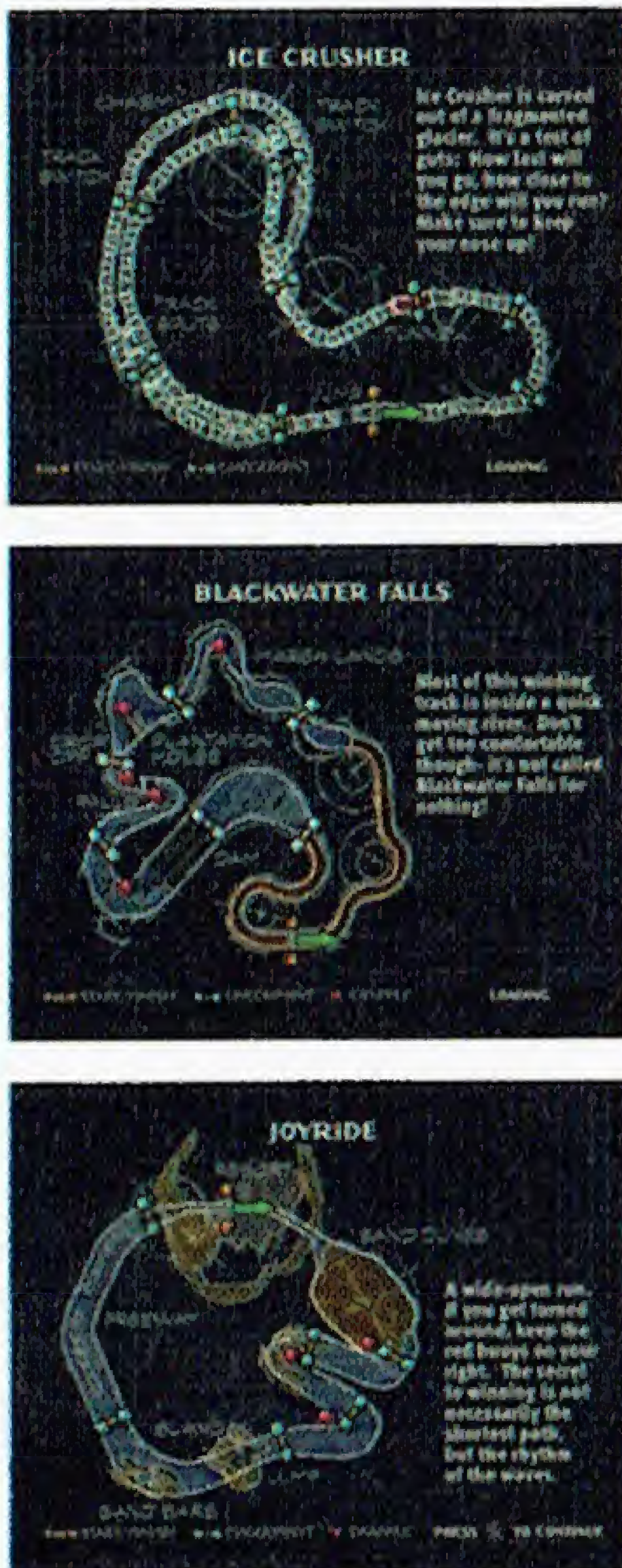
Jet Rider

Get set for a race with a difference, this game has some of the sickest courses this side of the future. We strapped Nick Smith on a jet and made him ride it.

PUBLISHER:	Sony
DEVELOPER:	Single Trac
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Racing
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One or two
LINK UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Standard
MEM CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	G

Alternatives

There are more than enough racing games to choose from, but nothing quite the same as *Jet Rider*. Almost like *Wipeout* in some respects, but without the speed.



Gnarly maps, dude.



Keep the nose up to get over sharp edges.

Taking the ever-popular racing theme and combining it with high speed hover bikes of the future, *Jet Rider* is fast and jam packed with unique features and some of the most challenging action ever seen in this type of game.

The bikes are kind of a cross between a jet ski and a hovercraft, thus permitting them to traverse just about any type of track surface. This has allowed the game designers to come up with a lot of unusual ideas in the planning of the tracks. Some of the tracks race across beaches and wave breaks, while others take to rivers and swamps. Generally, the track designs are quite clever, with heaps of sharp twists, high speed turns, jumps and drops for riders to learn and, eventually master. Among the most interesting tracks are the Suicide courses. These are comprised of a single length of track with a check point at each end. Upon reaching it, the riders make a U-turn and head back through the rest of the pack. As you would imagine, this can result in severe head-on collisions, quite hilarious in two player mode.

In the Championship, you race against 19 pumped-up surf freaks for the title. The computer racers are fast, rough and very tough to beat. Finishing in the top three of the first races can



Jet Rider offers two styles of split-screen racing, depending on the layout of the courses.



That pink thing is the grapple. Use it wisely and victory shall be within your grasp.

be a real challenge, but it's the only way to progress to the later stages. Some of these tracks are creatively designed (especially the ice stage in which you race across angled blocks of ice), so it's really worth making the effort to reach them.

One of the hardest things about *Jet Rider* is learning how to properly control your jet bike. The first mistake most people make is trying to drive it like a car. Speeding along just a few feet off the ground doesn't offer much traction, so you have to line up turns early so as to get a clean run through them.

An interesting feature that makes cornering on some of the tracks a little easier is the electro-magnetic grappling beam. It can be used whenever the pink grappling poles appear, usually at the apex of tight corners and hairpin turns. When activated within range, a beam will shoot out and attach itself to the



post. This has the effect of rubber-banding the jet bike around the turn, careful timing, however, is essential. Activate it too soon and it may pull you off your racing line and flick you into the outer track barrier. Use it too late or for too long, and you'll find yourself being pulled back the way you came.

You also get four turbo boosts per lap which are replenished at the start/finish line. These are good for getting quick leads at the start and can give you the edge when coming out of tight turns. Turbo boosts are also handy for taking short cuts, but make sure your aim is true, for you only need to brush against some obstacles to be pulled off or decapitated!

First impressions of *Jet Rider* may not be entirely favourable - coming last in a field of 20 is not very encouraging and may deter casual players from continuing. But given a chance, and an awful lot of practice, *Jet Rider* becomes quite enjoyable. The more you play it, the more you'll become accustomed to the many subtleties it has to offer. The way you can shift the rider's weight around is an important part of the game, and understanding this leads to a greater appreciation of what this game has to offer. Perhaps not the sort of racing game you might expect, but if *Jet Rider* takes your fancy, you could well fall in love with it.

GRAPHICS:	★★★	Looks like arcade games did before they discovered polygons
SOUND:	★★★★	Cool old-style surf music and great screams from fallen riders
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Initially frustrating, but gets better the more you play
LIFESPAN:	★★★★	It will take a while to beat, and the two-player mode is a good laugh
ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Interesting track designs make for a fresh approach to a tired genre

OVERALL: *Jet Rider* may not look like a next generation game, but its unique style and surprising level of depth result in a racing game with a difference.



OUT OF TEN

*Monster Trucks

If you've ever wanted to drive over the top of all of the other cars when you're stuck in a traffic jam, this is the game for you. **Clyde E. Scope** liked the sound of that!



Endurance Mode L to R: Herbie goes to Dubbo. Special on haemorrhoid cream at our drive-thru counter. Me and my girl Tina, in the back of my Cortina.

Here's yet another racing game, but the vehicles you drive are far from ordinary. You must pit your racing skills in modified cars and trucks, like those you've only ever seen on American TV! There are nine trucks to choose from, each with their own handling characteristics, ranging from a Combi on steroids to Ford F100 trucks with huge suspension and wheels.

Monster Trucks distinguishes itself from other driving games by offering two modes of racing to try: circuit racing and endurance racing. Circuit racing is, as the name implies, the usual racing around a track. There are seven tracks with a wide range of terrain including desert dunes, grassy hills, snowy mountains and a dangerous one winding around active volcanoes. During the Circuit races it's in your best interest to drive carefully and stay in the middle of the track, as running into the side or crashing into fellow racers will cause damage to your suspension. Too much damage and you're out of the race. Driving off the track into the sea or a bubbling pool of lava will trash your suspension in about five seconds! There are also huge jumps and drop-offs around the tracks, so

sometimes you'll have to take it easy until the last lap so you aren't forced to retire due to suspension trouble.

Endurance racing is much less restrictive and presents you with four different islands to race around, passing through checkpoints along the way. There are roads, but sometimes the quickest (and most enjoyable) way is cross-country. You still have to consider your suspension in this mode of play, but the terrain is no where near as demanding as in the circuit racing. An interesting feature, should you get lost or bogged in soft terrain, is that a helicopter can be called upon to pick you up and drop you at the last checkpoint you passed.

Every few rounds you get to experience the true purpose of these juggernauts - car crushing. In this mode you are in an arena and have one minute to inflict as much damage as possible upon a row of parked cars. This is fun, but you kind of wish it went for a bit longer or that there were more cars to crush. Oh well, turn around and smash 'em again!

Driving is relatively easy, as all trucks are automatic. Most of the time you'll be driving flat out (except when you're suffering heavy damage) and the L

and R buttons allow you to make sharper turns. And that's about all there is to it. The circuit tracks are very short and the three laps can be over before you know it. The computer controlled opposition can make it tough, especially when they ram you and slow you to a crawl, but you still have a chance to catch up with the leaders - sometimes they seem to wait up ahead, just to tease you!

While it all sounds quite fun, *Monster Trucks* can at times be really annoying. Like when you take considerable damage even when you try to drive carefully. On some tracks, if you have more than one big smash, it's almost impossible to complete the race without totalling your suspension. The Endurance races are more interesting, but sometimes it feels like you're just driving around in a convey with the other trucks.

Monster Trucks may sound quite exciting, but despite the potential this game is a bit of a let down in some areas. Some players may find it too boring and others may feel restricted by the harsh damage metered out. Still, there will be plenty of people who'll love it and if it's the sort of game that appeals to you, maybe you'll love it too.

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
DEVELOPER:	Reflections
DISTRIBUTOR:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	March
PRICE:	\$89.95 *
GAME TYPE:	Racing
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
MEMORY CARD:	Save points
CLASSIFICATION:	G



"Hey Pa, you smashin' 'em automobiles up real good! I wanna be jest like you when I grows up! Hyuk hyuk!"



Damn hippies in their Combi van swerving all over the road (left). It's fun to get air, but be careful. On the other side of that hill lies a lava pit (right).

Alternatives

This is the only full-on monster truck game available, but *Hardcore 4X4* offers a less extreme form of off-road racing.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Nice lighting effects, but the terrain looks a bit sparse
■ SOUND:	★★	Sounds more like lawn mowers than monster trucks!
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	Fast and easy to control, but too easy to master
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	More of an occasional thrash than an on-going challenge
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Some good ideas, but nothing really new

■ OVERALL: *Monster Trucks* has some nice ideas, but it may take a lot of persistence on the player's behalf to find them. A great concept, but slightly flawed in execution.

7

OUT OF TEN

Nanotek Warrior

New game, old concept. Nanotek Warrior takes inspiration from many old arcade classics, in particular Tempest. Clyde E. Scope takes a trip back in time.

PUBLISHER:	Virgin
DEVELOPER:	Tempest
DISTRIBUTOR:	Virgin
RELEASE:	TBA
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Shooter
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
MEM CARD:	Passwords
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Forward motion ceases when you confront a boss, much like in *Starwing* (left). Riding the Hershey highway (right). Well, it looks like a chocky bar. Or a tur

Nanotek Warrior, as the name suggests, thrusts you into the world of nanotechnology. Racing down microscopic wires, your mission is to eliminate the bugs in the system. You do this with your ship which, when moved left or right, rotates around the wire. Your ship actually stays in the middle of the screen; the environment rotates as you move. To start with, you only have basic firepower, but as you progress through the stages, you can pick up the obligatory power-ups which provide you with special weapons. Along with eliminating bugs, there are obstacles which have to be negotiated by either moving out of the way or using a jump facility. The length of time you hold your button down dictates how far you can jump. You can also control the timing of your jumps by speeding up (forward) or slowing down (back on your joystick).

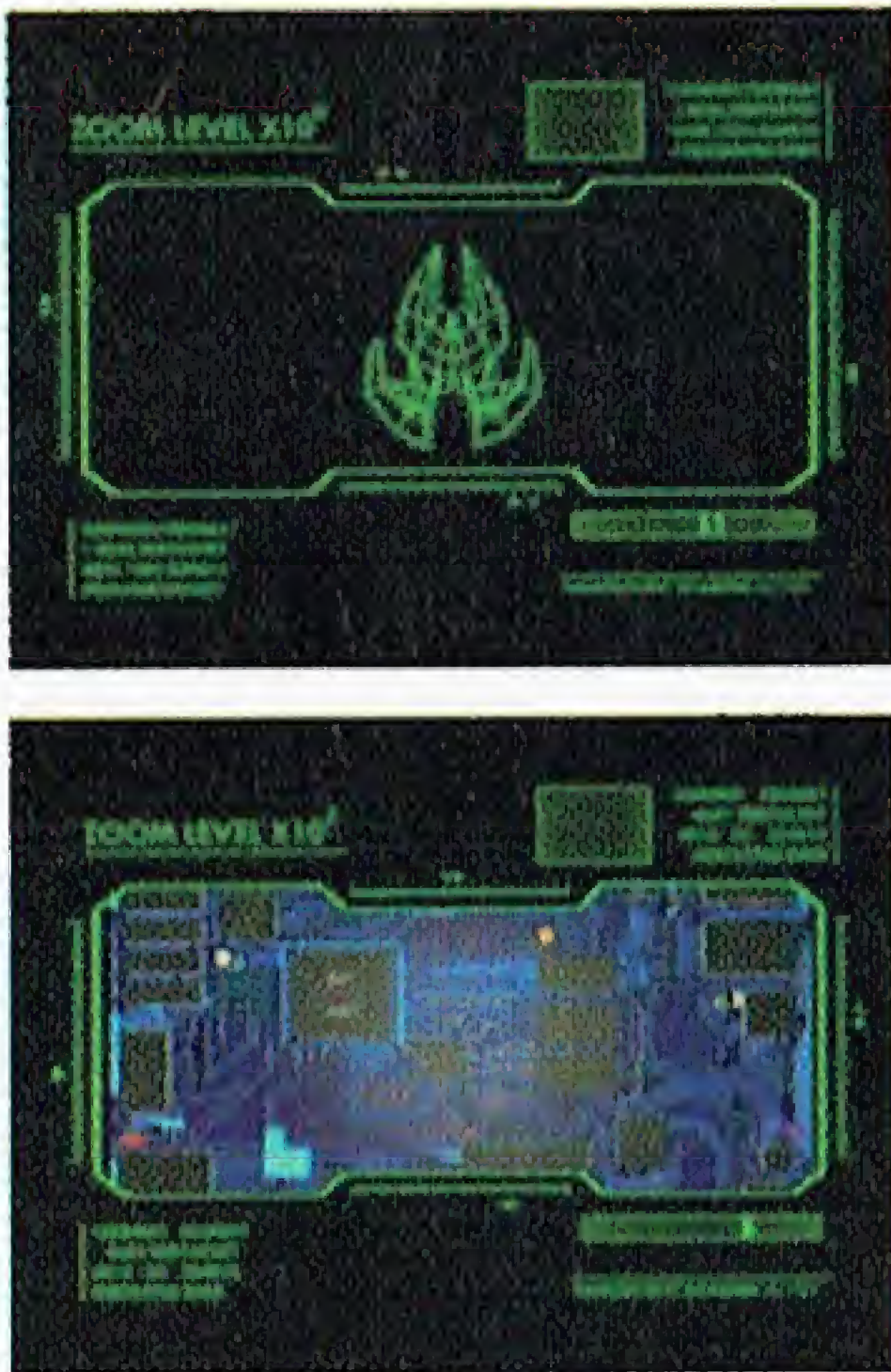
Each stage is divided into two parts. The first is speeding along on top of the wire, the second through the centre in a tunnel. You are given a shield (to protect you from damage as a result of smashing into objects or getting hit by fire from the bugs) which can be replenished by picking up power-ups. As

your shield depletes, a warning beep will sound, and, as your shield gets lower, the time between beeps shortens - it strikes fear into your heart as you desperately hunt for a shield power-up! Smashing into things is easier than you think, as not all objects are stationary. An example of this are the huge fans rotating inside the tunnel - these require careful timing to pass safely.

The bugs which come to attack you are weird and wonderful in both appearance and nature. The style of graphics is something like a cross between *Tron* and *The Lawnmower Man*! Not all are attacking you from ground level, so jumping and firing or a special weapon with homing capabilities is required. There are 'mini' bosses to

contend with throughout each stage - these must be destroyed in order to continue along the level. As expected, at the end of each level is a 'big' boss. This is where the gameplay changes slightly. You come into an area of open space with the boss in the middle. You can rotate a full 360 degrees laterally and in a limited scope up and down. Most of the bosses have pulsating shields, so you need to have a good aim in order to destroy them. In some of the later stages, the bosses even have helpers which are best destroyed before taking on the boss itself.

Your ship also has the ability to strafe, allowing you to shoot on an angle out to the sides. You can also quickly rotate your ship so it flies along vertically for a period of time. The benefit of these functions is not entirely obvious, though in some tight situations these prove helpful. This game is not going to appeal to everyone, but there is a certain attraction in its gameplay and graphic style. The soundtrack is nothing to write home about, but is suitable and doesn't detract. If you've ever played and liked Atari's *STUN Runner* or *Tempest*, *Nanotek Warrior* could be for you.



Techie intro bits



Scorpion boss dead ahead (left). Another boss, with rotating shields (top). What the inside of a computer looks like (middle). Yellow restart point (right).

GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Lots of trippy, pulsating colours
SOUND:	★★★★	Typical techno tunes with the usual explosions
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Fast and demands total concentration
LIFESPAN:	★★★	You play it heaps until you beat it, then not a lot more
ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Old ideas, new format. Fresh!

OVERALL: *Nanotek Warrior* provides solid blasting action that harks back to the days when video games were all about zapping wave upon wave of invading aliens and you never released the fire button.

7
OUT OF TEN

Rebel Assault 2

Here's yet another time line in the ever expanding Star Wars universe. Amos Wong, fresh out of the Rebel Alliance Academy, suits up and sails forth.



The Empire has created a new secret weapon that could crush The Alliance once and for all (don't they always?) and you, a happy-go-lucky Rebel pilot, find yourself amongst the team dispatched to find more information about this mysterious device. Needless to say, you quickly find yourself up against numerous life threatening situations!

The format of the game is one of those dreaded 'interactive' movies, whereby you watch a cinematic scene followed by an action sequence in which you take part. These sequences are either of the flying variety, where you pilot Rebel craft while dodging obstacles and/or shooting down Imperial vermin; or the ground combat variety in which our hero runs around bases swarming with Imperial Storm Troopers and the like.

While the digitised actors in these segments are generally pretty cheesy (except for Darth Vader and the Storm Troopers), they nevertheless blend in with the computer generated sets fairly well. The scenes themselves successfully convey the background story with atmosphere (helped along by the orchestral score) and the spacecraft shots are very impressive indeed - you've got to love those transforming B-Wing fighters!

The real disappointment with *Rebel Assault II* is in the playability.



A rebel B-Wing encounters a lone tie fighter

Confusion abounds, particularly in the flight sequences, as 'up' on the D-pad moves the aiming crosshairs up in the cockpit shooting levels, yet in the 'avoid the obstacles' levels where the view is from behind your ship, the controls are reversed and 'up' sends you into a dive. Not only that, but the ship doesn't seem to be entirely under your control; at times it gets 'nudged' for no apparent reason.

Rather than generating the backgrounds as real-time polygons, the programmers have opted to stream them off CD. This makes avoiding many of the obstacles especially tricky, as they simply don't convey a good sense of distance between your ship and the crazy tangle of bulkheads it's supposed to fly through. During an X-Wing level through an asteroid field evasive action was nearly impossible, with great drains on the shields as the fighter was hit by huge

asteroids that could have been easily avoided - if only there was some decent response to the controls! Very frustrating...

The ground combat sequences fare a bit better, but there isn't much to them. As well as aiming and shooting, you can also hide behind a wall or bulkhead to avoid the enemy's return fire. It doesn't take long to work out where the Storm Troopers appear from, then it's simply a matter of quickly ducking out when one appears, lining up the aiming cursor and picking them off one at a time. If you use the hide button well, these sequences are a walk in the park and soon become routine.

Save for some nice spaceship scenes, there really isn't much to this game. However, this is more of an experience than a game. If you're a big *Star Wars* fan and that's what you're after, *Rebel Assault II* fits the bill quite well. Just be sure to know what you're getting.

PUBLISHER:	Lucas Arts
DEVELOPER:	Lucas Arts
DISTRIBUTOR:	Playcorp
RELEASE:	March
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Interactive movie
DIFFICULTY:	Frustrating
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



FMV sequences don't get much better than this - but how can you beat Star Wars?



From inside your cockpit (left) "There they are! Set your blasters to miss!" (centre) You're the dork in the red suit ducking for cover. (right)

Alternatives

Rebel Assault II has a unique style, but if you want a good *Star Wars* game check out *Dark Forces*.

GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Good mix of rendered art and FMV, but could have been smoother
SOUND:	★★★	Star Wars through and through
GAMEPLAY:	★★	Severely lacking, mostly a case of just pushing in the right direction
LIFESPAN:	★★	May take many goes to get through, but you may not want to
ORIGINALITY:	★★	The <i>Star Wars</i> plot is the only thing that holds it together

OVERALL: *Rebel Assault II* is more of an 'interactive experience' than a real game. Best for die hard *Star Wars* fans.

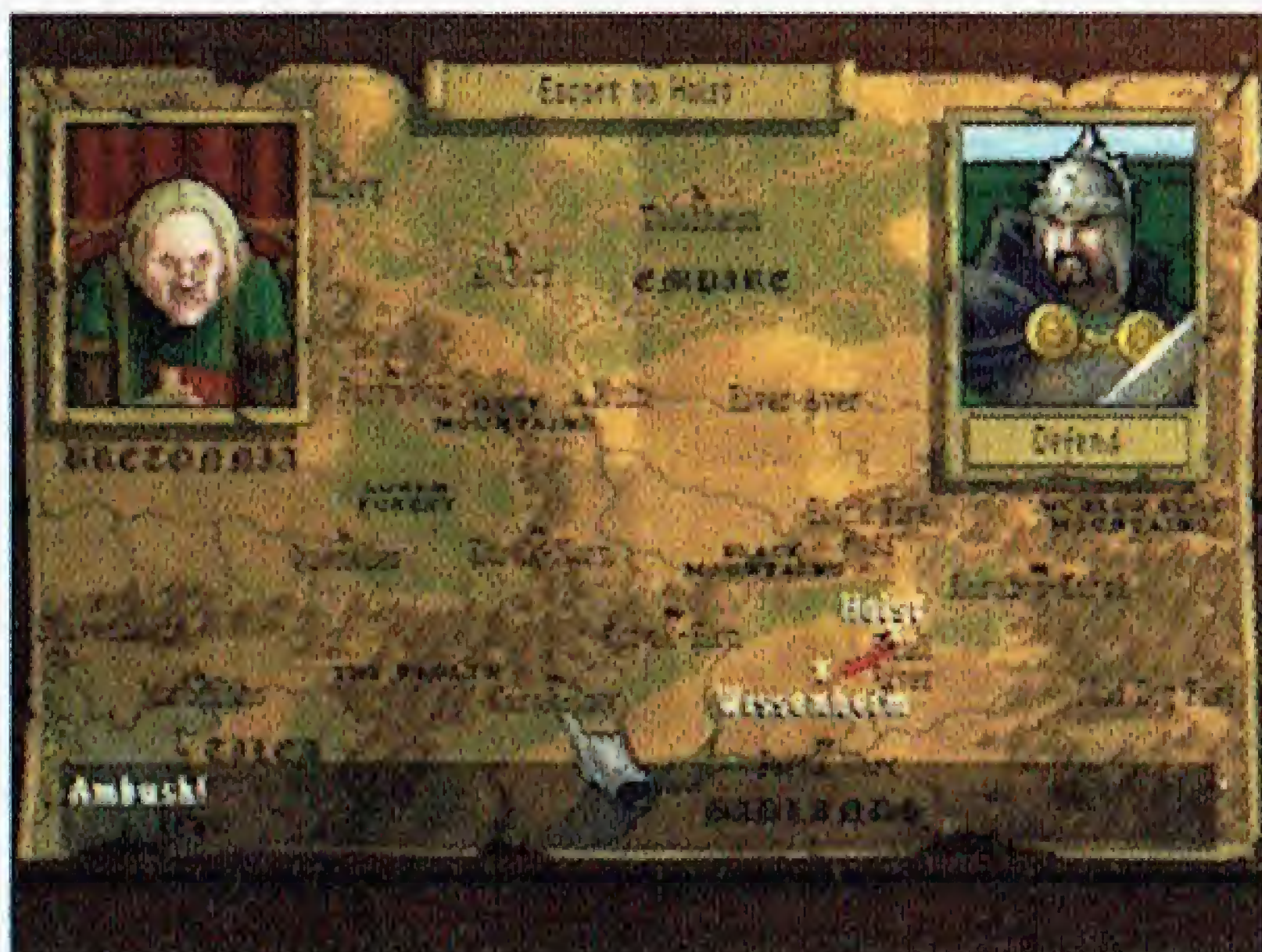
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OUT OF TEN

Warhammer - Shadow of the Horned Rat

When **Tim Smith** started talking about shadows of horned rats following him everywhere, we knew he'd been staying up too late. But was it to finish the game or the review?

PUBLISHER:	Mindscape
DEVELOPER:	SSI
DISTRIBUTOR:	Mindscape
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	War/strategy
DIFFICULTY:	Challenging
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	TBA



If you happen to like Dungeons & Dragons and Command & Conquer, Warhammer is just the sort of game you've been waiting for.

Warhammer is an immensely popular real-time strategy role playing game which simulates battles in a world not unlike *Dungeons & Dragons*. Like *D&D*, Warhammer has a myriad of rules to study before you can begin. It is best to take some time out to sit down and study the manual to get a handle on the game mechanics.

You assume the role of Morgan Bernhardt, Commander and Leader of the Grudgebringer mercenaries. Your goal is to build the largest army in the land and restore some order to the chaos. The only obstacle in your way is that it takes money to build an army, so as swords for hire, you set out to make your fortune by acquiring missions. The early missions are quite simple tasks, such as escorting caravans from town to town. As chaos prevails, you are required to perform more dangerous tasks which reward you with greater amounts of money, and therefore allow you to have more troops under your command. Apart from the individual missions, a bigger, more sinister plot is unfolding. What part you will play in

this is yet to be determined!

As you don't have a permanent home base, your caravan is the HQ of your operations. Here, with the aid of Paymaster Dietrich you can check at a glance troop rosters, bestiary encyclopedia, magic spells, how much money you have, and training, as well as saving your game and selecting missions. All are selected simply by moving the hand cursor over the book in question, and pressing a button. More complicated, however, are the battle controls. It takes a good few hours to get a solid handle on what does what, but make the effort to understand and you shouldn't have a problem.

The inhabitants of the Warhammer world are extremely diverse, with over 25 different creatures to come in contact with. As well as your own troops, at times you will be able to hire additional mercenaries which add diversity to your forces, e.g. Archers, useful for long range assaults. In preparing for battle, you will find there are many factors to take into consideration when selecting your

troops. Strength and experience are two major factors, but there is also an element of psychology involved. Fear and hatred play a big part of the creatures interaction with each other. For example, if the mission was to destroy a band of Goblins, you would be wise to send in Elves as the Goblins are terrified of them. Although this is just another statistic to worry about, it does bring a new level of involvement to the game.

Graphically, the game is very well thought out and the full motion video sequences are smooth and enhance the atmosphere of the game. In actual battle, however, the troops are too small to have any detail, but the surroundings and scenery are all rendered in 3D. You can even scroll around the field to get a better view.

If you have played and loved *Command & Conquer*, then you should really enjoy the world of Warhammer. There is a lot to digest, but the gameplay is involving and richly rewarding. With over 40 missions to complete, this game guarantees many late nights ahead!



I say, is that a horned rat lurking in the shadows?



Your loyal troops obey every order you give them (left). You have command over a number of platoons. Surround the enemy to prevent them fleeing (right).

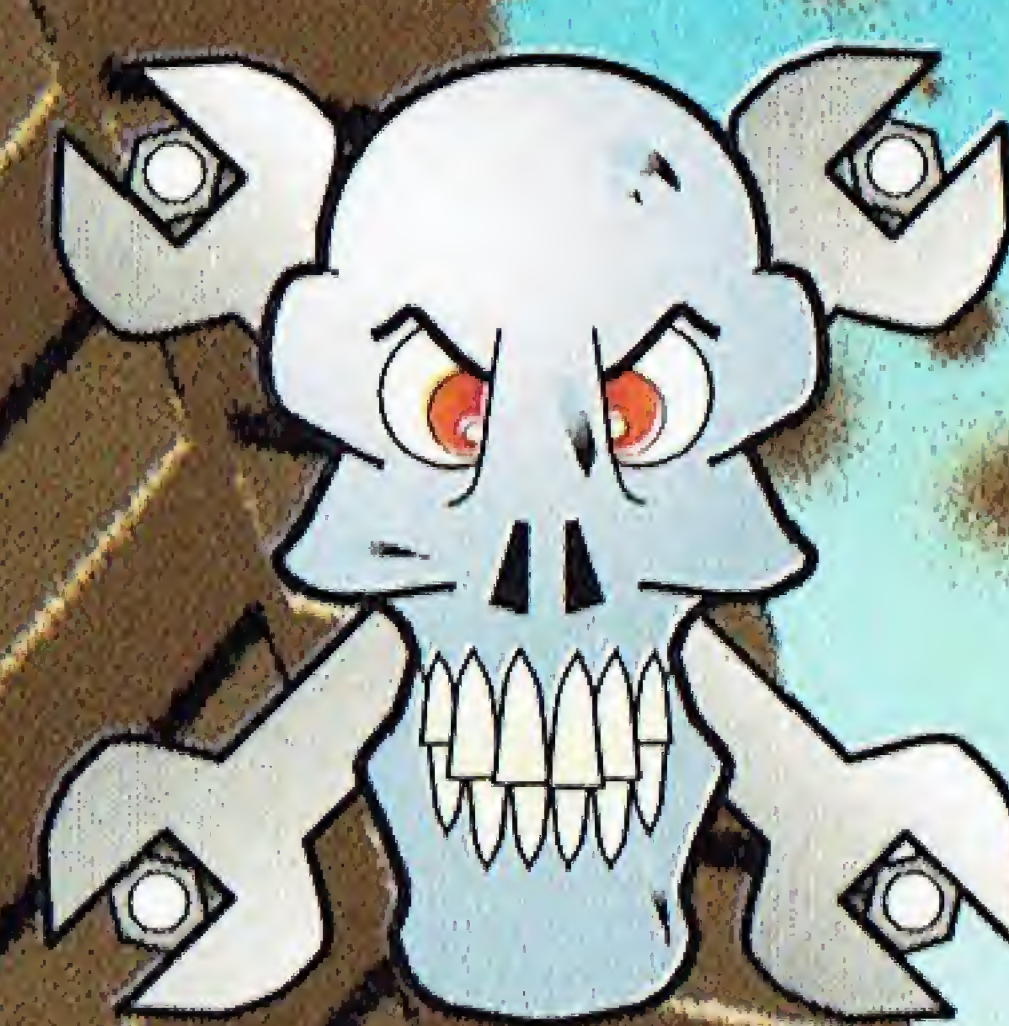


■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	Does the job, but the troops are a bit small
■ SOUND:	★★★	Gutsy battle sounds, and the voices are amusing
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Many engrossing hours of tactics and battles ahead
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	The sort of game that makes you lose track of time
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★	Similar to <i>Command & Conquer</i> , but different

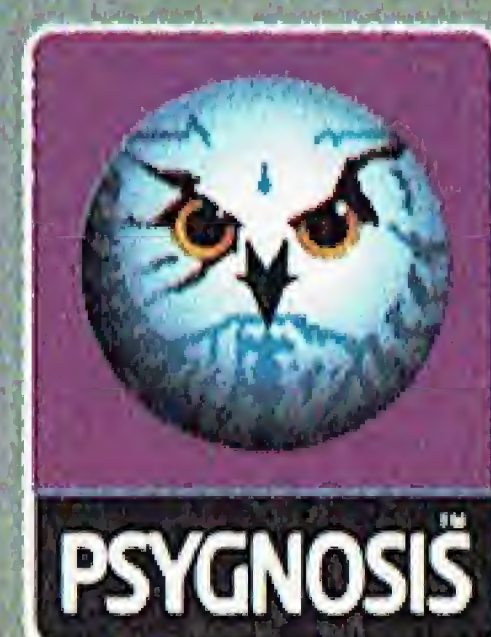
■ OVERALL: If you want an deep, richly rewarding game that you can spend hours playing, look no further than Warhammer.

7
OUT OF TEN

MONSTER TRUCKS



play'n
dirty.



PC
CD
ROM



Riot

Yet another futuristic sport game promising action and excitement unlike anything you've ever seen. We woke **Adrian Bertram** from his cryogenic sleep to test this claim.

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
DEVELOPER:	Psygnosis
DISTRIBUTOR:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	March
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Team sport
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	1 to 8 Multi-tap
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Save seasons
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G8



Even sports games need slick rendered intros.

With multiple versions of every team and solo sport known to humans currently available on all game platforms, software developers have three choices when deciding to produce a new game. They can either offer up another yearly update of whatever sport is "hot" at the time, base the game on a lesser-known sport, or invent a new sport altogether. In *Riot*, Psygnosis has chosen the third option and created a new futuristic sport known as ... *Riot*. *Riot* follows in the footsteps of games such as *Speedball* in being a fast, arena-based violent ball game. *Riot* is basically a blend of soccer and basketball with a few twists, with the traditional futurist credo of no rules. The object of the game is to gain possession of the plasma ball with your team of four players and get it charged. This is accomplished by running it up to your team's charge point, located at the end of the court. Once the ball is charged, you can shoot for a goal. The goal is centrally located above the ground, and can thus be shot at from any angle, with various zones on the floor dictating the goal's worth - between one and three points. Outside these basic concepts, there are no

rules and a complete free-for-all ensues with violence and dirty tricks encouraged. Probably the best thing about *Riot* is its graphics. Running in the PlayStation's high resolution mode, *Riot* has the sort of polygon motion other sports games only dream of. All the actions of the players are very realistic, and the stadiums look great, as does the plasma ball. Differentiating between players can sometimes be difficult at a distance, but the enormous number of camera angles should allow players to overcome this problem. Sound effects and music on *Riot* are pretty much what you have come to expect from the current crop of top-end sport games - lots of grunts and thumps, a large crowd and a couple of losers providing the commentary.

One interesting point about *Riot* is that the team conference is an international one, and with two teams from each of the countries (including Sydney and Melbourne), the possibilities for domestic and international warfare are present. Sure, this is only a minor point, but it's little touches like this which give a game greater longevity. The problem with *Riot*, however, is

that the controls really aren't precise enough. Yes, the game's characters move slickly and smoothly, but the controls can be a bit awkward. In particular, charging the ball can be unnecessarily hard sometimes, and the automatic player selection on the defence tends to shift too quickly; usually just when you've realised who it is you're controlling. As one-player games can be a bit tough when playing against a computer with no such control problems, the real strength of this sort of game is in its multi-player use. *Riot* can be played by up to eight players, and although my trials with four players were pretty cool, I suspect eight could get horribly confusing without an enormous TV. While *Riot* is the sort of game that will probably get better and better as you get used to the peculiarities of the controls, the ultimate loser will be your thumbs. In fact, I found this game to be one of the most viciously thumb savaging games I have ever played (outside a beat 'em up). But, if you've got thumbs of steel or really big calluses, you should be okay. Definitely one of the better entries in the future-sport realm.



As futuristic multi-player sports games go, *Riot* is certainly one of the better ones. There's one goal post, and it's in the centre of the court (lower right).

Alternatives

Pitball, or any good hockey, soccer or basketball game.

GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Very slick and shiny, but sometimes it's hard to see what's going on
SOUND:	★★★	Nothing special. Announcers may amuse or irritate you
GAMEPLAY:	★★★	Fast, but takes some getting used to
LIFESPAN:	★★★	Sport games can be played repeatedly and this is no exception
ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Unique, although it does borrow heavily from past classics

OVERALL: An interesting variation on the futuristic sports theme, but in some ways *Riot* is too clever for its own good. Recommended for keen fans of team sports.



OUT OF TEN

* *The City of Lost Children*

The film that inspired this game featured strange music and foreign sailors lurking about the docks. Who better to review the game than **Adrian Bertram**?

The City of Lost Children was a highly successful French film, released a couple of years ago by the makers of *Delicatessen*. The plot concerned the adventures of an idiot savant strongman named One and a young orphan girl called Miette, who team up to find One's little brother Denree. Denree, it seems, has become one of the most recent additions to the menagerie of children the twisted Krank has captured. Due to a genetic defect, Krank cannot dream, and so must steal dreams from others to remain young. The film was most notable for its surreal atmosphere and breathtaking setting. It is these two features in particular that the game's producers have set out to reproduce.

This is no cheaply cobbled together film tie-in. Its production involved an unprecedented level of co-operation between the producers of the film and those of the game. The plot of the game, while basically the same as the film, has enough differences to keep interest high. The main difference is that in the game, the action is seen from Miette's point of view, where in the film, One is the primary focus.

Once you start up the game, it is instantly apparent that the atmosphere was a major effect the producers wished to replicate in the game version. In this task they have had unqualified success. The graphical representation of the people and places in *The City of Lost*



The *City of Lost Children* is a wonderful film and the game faithfully recreates its look and feel.

Children is just amazing. The sumptuous locations are virtually exact replicas of their cinematic counterparts (where applicable). The new scenes added for the game have been created in the same style with advice from the original set designer and, as a result, fit in perfectly.

The characters themselves have all been motion captured, right down to the minor players. The game is able to boast the use of the youngest person ever to be motion captured. Add to this huge sections of fully rendered pre-recorded material for event sequences, and you have a game with the visual component of unbelievably high quality. Nitpickers may say "But the water doesn't move" to which I reply "Get a life".

The sound and music reflect the mood of the original, with great atmospheric sound effects, and music which is uncommonly good and unusually unobtrusive for a video game.



It's a pity we English speakers have to deal with Liverpoolian "French" accents while the French version features the voices of the original cast. While this is only a minor detraction, it's a shame there wasn't an option to have French language with English subtitles.

The game, unfortunately, does possess a few faults. All adventure games tend to be a bit frustrating at times. Often, it's difficult to work out exactly what you're supposed to be doing - *The City* is no exception. True frustration can set in on even some of the simpler problems; so beware. I had a solution to the game handy when I was playing, and I still found myself up against problems which sent my control pad flying and made my PlayStation the object of unnecessary verbal abuse. The main cause of these problems is in the control of Miette. Sometimes I knew I was absolutely doing the right thing, but the action could not be completed because I was not in the exact pixel-perfect position. While I was able to check my notes until I got it right, players who choose to play the game honestly may feel that they are victims of some strange conspiracy.

Another problem is that the hidden objects you need to pick up blend in to the environment so well that they are practically invisible, especially on a smaller TV screen. Additionally, many of the objects are hidden behind things, so you have to know what you're looking for or look absolutely everywhere.

The game is also a little short, and the ending a bit anti-climactic, but it will still take quite a long time to complete.

Overall, *The City of Lost Children* may not be the smoothest playing adventure game available, but it is definitely one of the best looking ones. Does justice to the film by capturing the mood and essence in the game, lacking only the black humour.

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
DEVELOPER:	Psygnosis
DISTRIBUTOR:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	March
PRICE:	\$89.95 *
GAME TYPE:	Adventure
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



The game is punctuated with many pre-rendered sequences which build the atmosphere.

Alternatives

A similar style of game to *Resident Evil* (ie. walking around looking for stuff), but *The City of Lost Children* has a totally different content. May also appeal to fans of *Broken Sword*.



Miette wavers precariously on the edge. The animation is incredibly lifelike thanks to motion capture.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	Stunning, breathtaking and enormously atmospheric
■ SOUND:	★★★★★	A truly wonderful musical score, spoilt only by awful accents
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	The control interface can be painfully slow
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	A bit short, but you will need much patience to complete it
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	A great representation of a great film

■ OVERALL: While it has an awkward control method, the mood is excellent and it's nice to see a film conversion that isn't just the latest Hollywood movie merchandise money spinner.

7

OUT OF TEN

Hard Core 4X4

This ain't no Sunday drive, this is hardcore racing off-road style!

Clyde E. Scope chucks the dog in the back of the ute and goes bush bashing. Look Ma, no seatbelt!

PUBLISHER:	Gremlin
DEVELOPER:	Gremlin
DISTRIBUTOR:	Mainstream Interactive
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.96
GAME TYPE:	Driving
DIFFICULTY:	Tough
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Useful
CONTROLLER:	Analogue
CLASSIFICATION:	G



The worst thing about Hardcore 4X4 is that the tracks are very narrow (left). Actually, driving on narrow roads in the snow is the worst thing (right).

I know what you're thinking - just another racing game with an inappropriate title, but this game is definitely not for the faint hearted. There are six tracks to race around, each with different terrain and road surfaces. You can select any one for a single race or time trial, or you can enter the championship where you race consecutively on all six. Hmm. Varying weather also makes the tracks more challenging - rain, fog and snow certainly test even the best drivers, especially at night. All the expected driving controls are there, as well as a hand brake and a horn which, for once, actually seems to have an effect on the other drivers. The game also supports analogue controllers and lets you adjust the sensitivity of the steering to your liking.

Rolling the truck is not as easy as you would think, but it's possible to have some spectacular crashes with the other trucks; the physics of such situations being quite realistic. Sometimes, on certain tracks with certain weather conditions, it is almost impossible to see where the course is going, but this problem diminishes with experience. If you crash into an obstacle or the side of the track you will lose speed,

but your truck usually ends up pointing in the right direction so you have a good chance of recovering your position. You also get three turbo boosts per race which propel you higher, faster and into even more spectacular crashes!

Players are given the choice of four views; two from behind the truck and two from the inside, with or without the dashboard and steering wheel. These inside views are not for the squeamish - the trucks tend to bounce around like a mechanical bull - and a higher perspective would have been nice. A rear vision mirror would have been useful, too, although the other racers start honking at you when they're coming up from the rear.

Three difficulty levels are available - novice, pro and extreme - and to progress to the next level you must win the championship. When you do, you are graced with a truck which has 25% more power. Of course, your competition also benefits from this and they'll take every opportunity to pass you. This is something you'll have to think about during the races, as the best driving line is not always a guarantee of victory, and

often you'll find yourself swerving from side to side just to keep in front.

The main disappointment with *Hardcore 4X4* is that it's only a one player experience and doesn't even offer a link-up game. While we're finding faults, the sound effects are dire, the music is atrocious and the commentator has the most lack-lustre voice ever heard in a game. (Imagine the current vice-president of America talking in his sleep!)

On the other hand, the graphics are richly detailed and the courses are long and varied; it takes more than a few quick laps before you're familiar with all their twists and turns. Perhaps some sort of map or co-driver shouting out instructions could have helped. You have to pay careful attention to the road surface. The most direct line through a corner isn't always the quickest, and you have to be on the lookout for nasty little ditches and furrows which slow you right down. This requires you to approach driving from a more technical viewpoint rather than relying on flat out speed alone to carry you across the finish line. As such, *Hardcore 4X4* could be described as a thinking driver's racing game. Not bad at all.

Alternatives

Psygnosis' *Monster Trucks*

Trucks is the only other off-road game currently available and is reviewed a few pages back.



Sometimes the other drivers don't know which way to go (left). Stomach churning view (centre). No way through? Time to go off-road (right).

■ GRAPHICS: ★★★★★

■ SOUND: ★★

■ GAMEPLAY: ★★★★★

■ LIFESPAN: ★★★

■ ORIGINALITY: ★★★

Luscious detail, good track design

Definitely not hardcore! Turn the music off

Frustration soon gives way to thoughtfulness

A good challenge, but not for instant thrills

Fairly standard, but some good ideas.

■ OVERALL: *Hardcore 4X4* is very good off-road driving game that relies on skill rather than outright speed to win, but may not be 'extreme' enough for some players.

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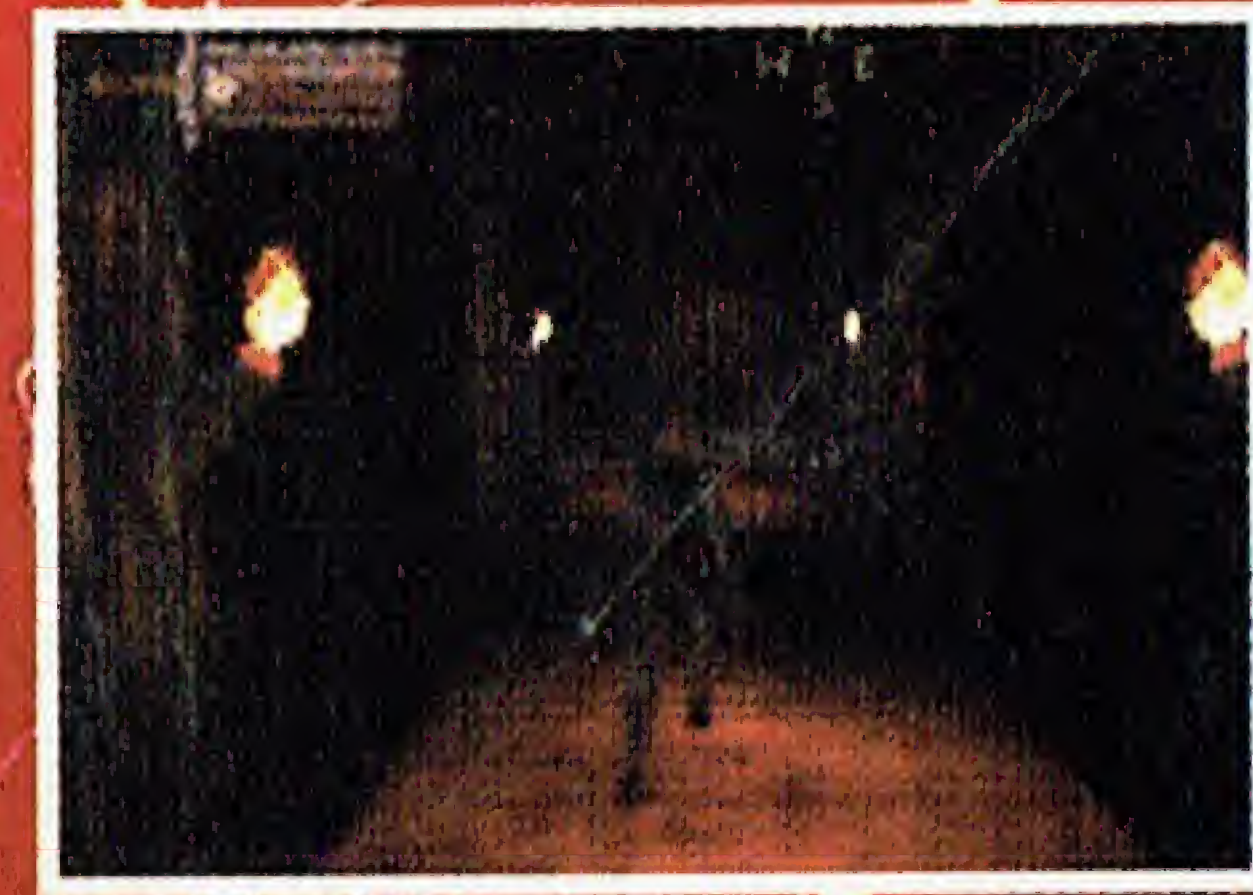
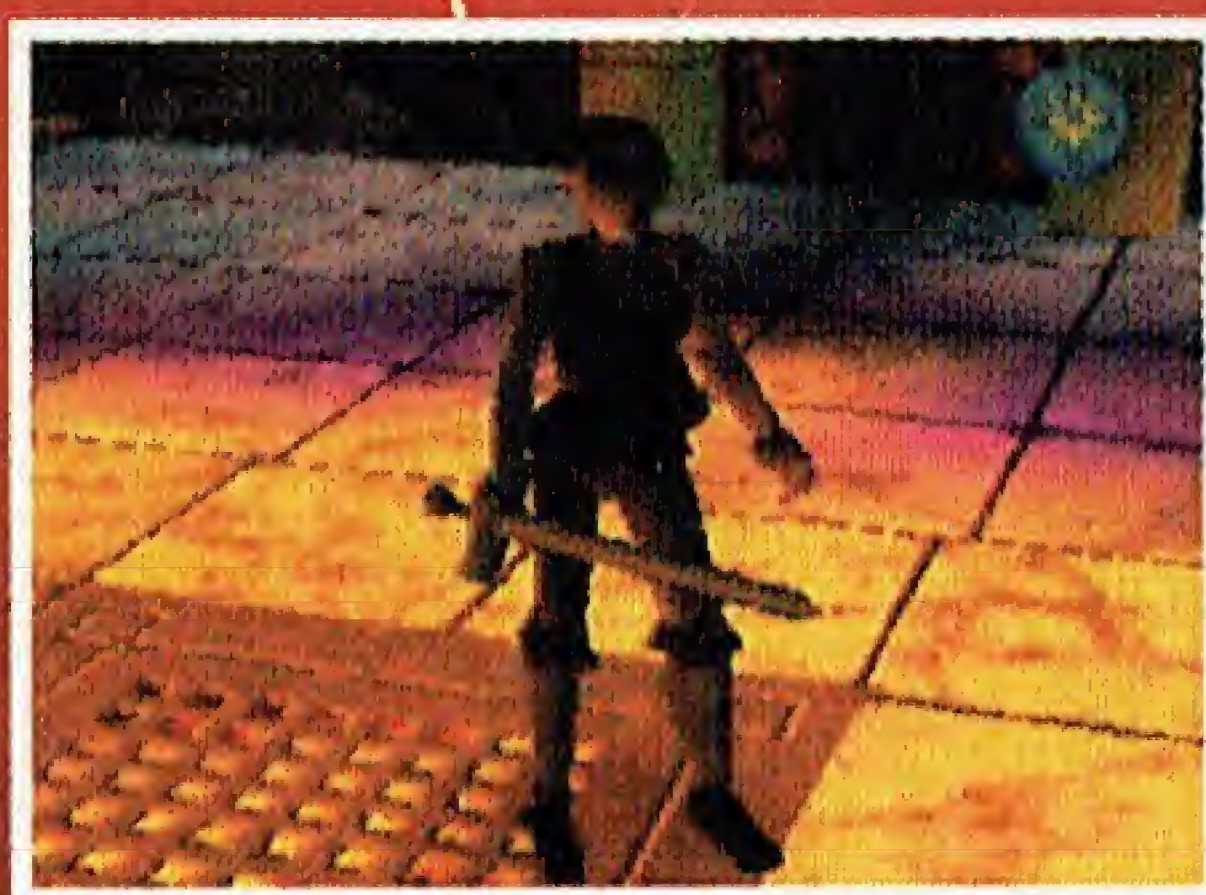
OUT OF TEN

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Area 51

PUBLISHER:	GT Interactive
RELEASE:	TBA
PRICE:	TBA
GAME TYPE:	Arcade shooter
PLAYERS:	1 or 2
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Light Gun
CLASSIFICATION:	TBA



Area 51. The most secret military base in the world. It is rumoured that this is where alien autopsies are performed and crashed UFOs are hidden. In the last 48 hours, however, a nasty alien virus has been unleashed upon the base and, as part of the Strategic Tactical Advanced Alien Response team, you've been called in. It's up to you to penetrate the base and eradicate every commie lovin' alien before they spread the disease to rest of the good ol' U.S. of A. God bless America!

First making an appearance in video arcades, *Area 51* is a light gun shooting game with digitised actors and animated aliens. You can play via the joypad, moving a target 'cursor' around the screen, which is a tad clumsy; or with a light gun, which is a tad inaccurate. Take your pick. There is no freedom of movement at all as you are herded along a predetermined path, your only interaction is shooting the aliens as they jump out from behind barrels, crates, vehicles, etc.

At your disposal is an unlimited number of bullets, but you must remember to reload the gun by either shooting off screen with your light gun, or hitting a button on the joypad. You begin the game with a standard gun, but this can be upgraded by firing upon 'special' targets. You get to keep the new weapon until you die and there are also grenades which have a 'smart bomb' effect and destroy every monster on screen at the time of detonation.

Graphically, *Area 51* is a nice blend of digitised actors and surroundings, with some of the more memorable levels including a non-stop jeep ride around the base. But that's the main problem with *Area 51*, it feels more like a ride than a game. The predetermined path is too restricting and thus offers little in replay value, other than to try and better your shooting accuracy. When *Operation Wolf* came out in the arcades 10 years ago, it was revolutionary, but today this style of game is history. If you want to shoot monsters there are plenty of better types of games, such as *Final Doom*, but if you're after a good light gun game set your sights on *Die Hard Trilogy*.



GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★
LIFESPAN:	★
ORIGINALITY:	★★

OVERALL: *Area 51* has plenty of aliens in orange overalls, but not much else.

4

OUT OF TEN

Disruptor

PUBLISHER:	Interplay/UIS
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Doom-style
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



Disruptor takes you into the future, where Earth has been united and peace is kept by an elite corps of Light Stormers. They are a commando force descended from the crack military unit which united the planet and the Solar colonies of our galaxy.

Before you start a mission you are given a full motion video briefing by your superiors and older brother, all of whom offer vital information regarding each particular level. The missions also use the FMV sequences to link them together. Usually the combination of video sequences and action doesn't add much to the proceedings, but it does work fairly well here, although the standard of acting is definitely in the B-grade category.

Your arsenal of weapons is where *Disruptor* differs from other games of this style and makes for an interesting and challenging game. As you gain experience, promotions to the higher ranks are awarded. More importantly, surgically implanted psionic weapons which use the power of your mind to combat the enemy can be gained. Top of the line implants grant you awesome destructive power and the ability to heal yourself or provide a shield for a few precious seconds. With only a limited amount of psychokinetic power at your disposal it's important not to waste it on unworthy foes, but top ups can be obtained by draining your enemies. A good balance of the conventional and psychokinetic weapons is crucial to succeed in later levels.

The game involves a lot of searching and hunting for your enemies, much like *Doom*, but this is where the similarity ends. Whereas *Doom* shocks the player with ferocious foes and cunning level designs, *Disruptor* has a much cleaner, almost clinical feel to it. The 13 levels provide a vast range of different locations, taking you from alien tombs on Mars, to space satellites, but you never really feel like you're actually there. Likewise, the enemies fail to instill any real sense of fear in you and don't offer much in the way of opposition. You walk through a door, kill everything in the room, then move on to the next without any real sense of achievement. The outside areas are more interesting, with a level of strategy needed to dispatch some of the tenacious aliens, but the atmosphere doesn't exactly envelope you.

GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★
ORIGINALITY:	★

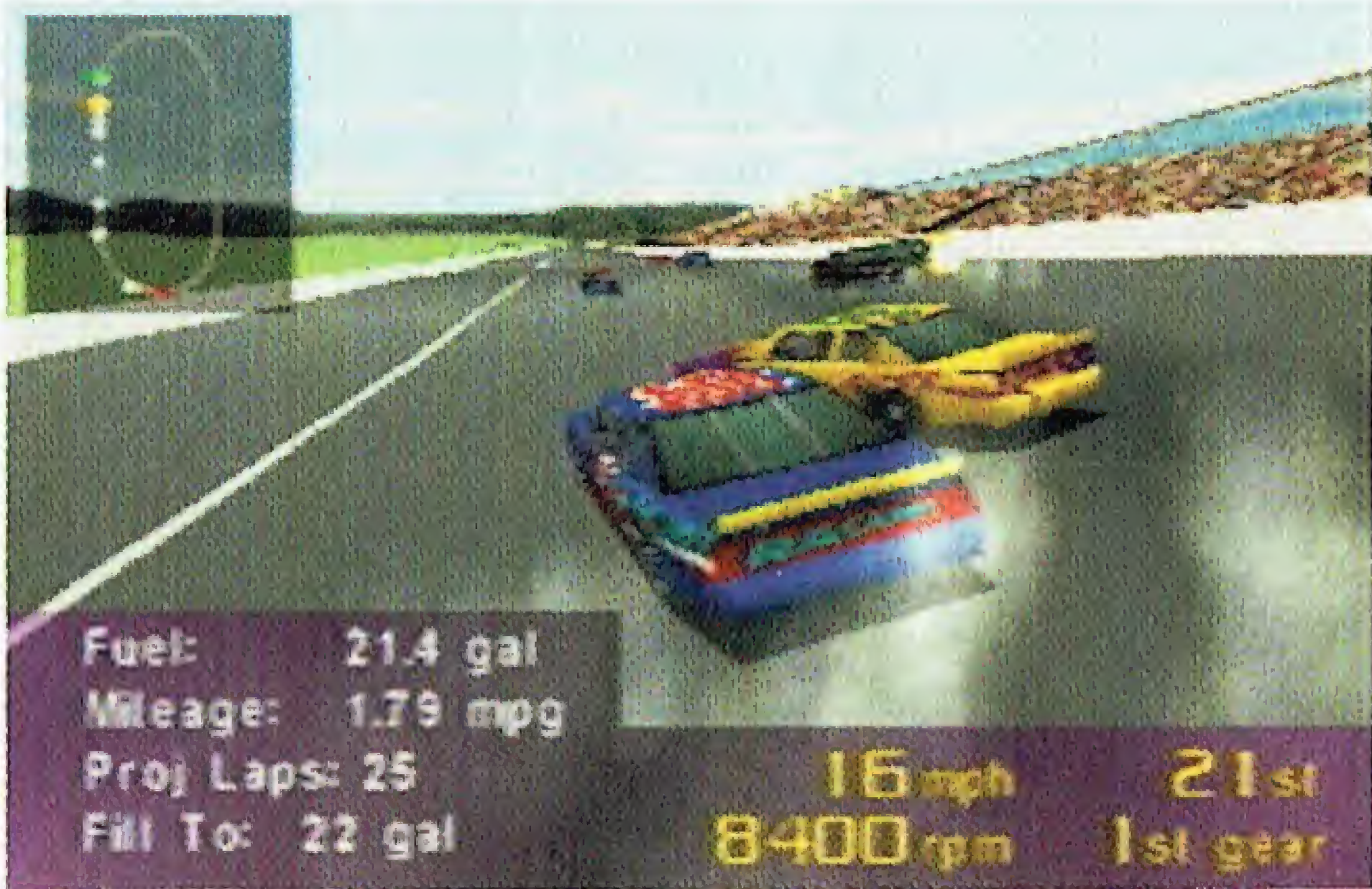
OVERALL: *Disruptor* is a reasonable *Doom* clone with a fair bit of variety, but it may not offer enough for hardened gamers who like to get their hands dirty.

6

OUT OF TEN

Nascar Racing

PUBLISHER:	Sierra
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Driving
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Save season
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



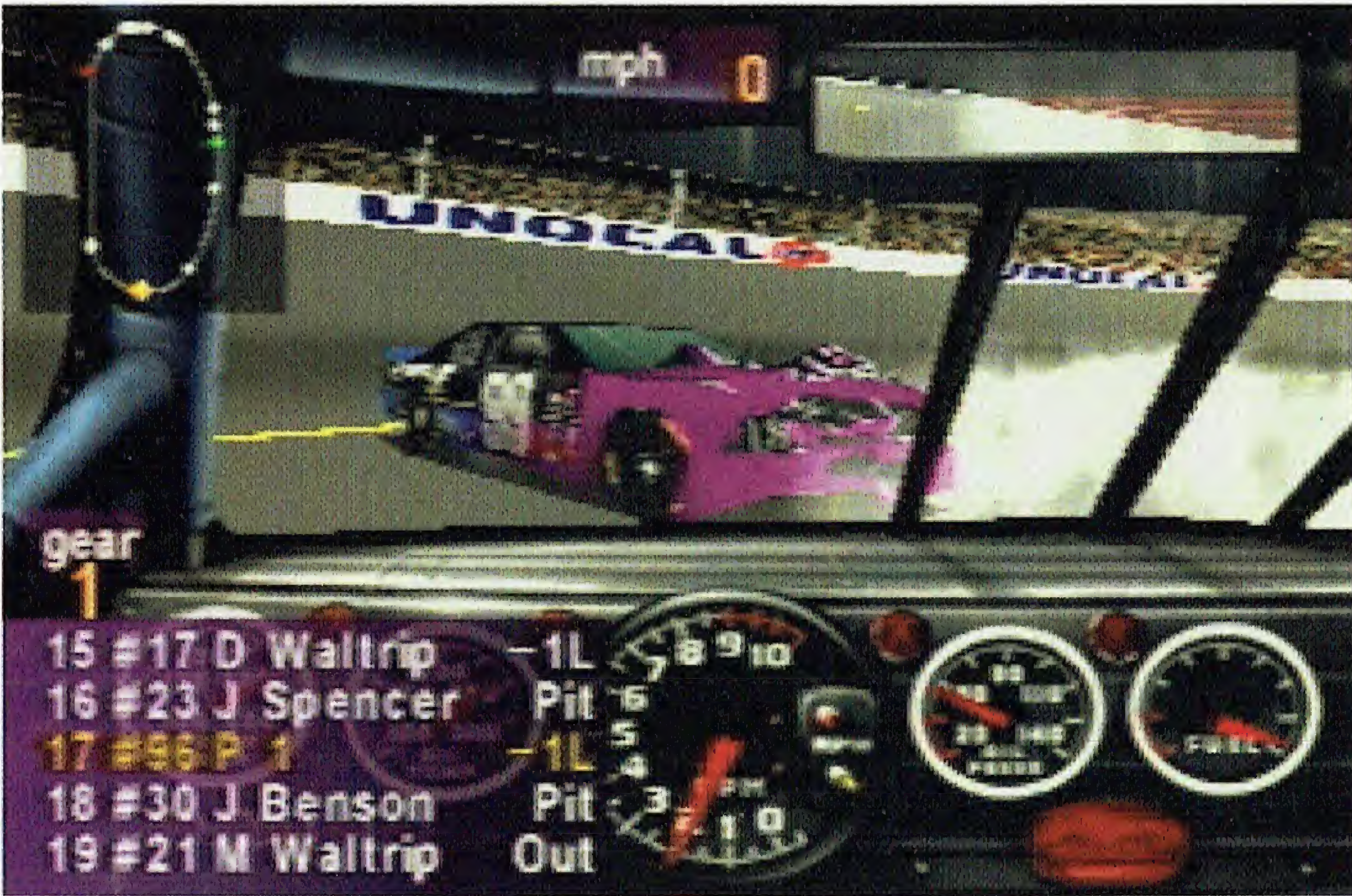
Boasting 16 licensed tracks, two fantasy tracks and a simulation or arcade race mode, *Nascar Racing* seems to have its bases covered. You can customize your car extensively in sim mode, from its aerodynamics to virtually everything to do with the wheels and then test the modifications on the tracks without competitors before committing to the Championship. While the features available in sim mode are very comprehensive, speed fiends can just skip all that stuff if they just want to burn rubber in arcade mode. But after the lights go green, *Nascar's* faults show up all too quickly.

To compete with the masses of excellent racing games already on the market, any new release in this genre had better be pretty special. Unfortunately *Nascar* doesn't even make it to the starting grid. The graphics are very dull, lacking in detail and devoid of texture mapping. They aren't even nicely designed; the cars look like plastic models put together by infants and the track side scenery is as sparse as the Simpson Desert.

At least the handling is fairly accurate, but without an active steering wheel to grip onto, it's hard to imagine that you're really driving at all. Compounding this is that in the cockpit view, far too much of the screen is taken up by the dashboard and interior of the car and you lose the 'in your face' racing sensation. Unfortunately, you don't have the option of switching to just a view of the track ahead.

You may wonder if it was worthwhile licensing tracks from around the USA, as most of the ones in *Nascar* are oval loops. The fantasy tracks only serve to highlight the inadequacies of the vehicles, as the handling goes out the window and you end up skidding around the miles of ridiculous curves in the track!

With a default of sometimes 20 laps, you may well be dozing off at the wheel by the third! In trying to simulate all aspects of the sport, *Nascar Racing* loses sight of what games are supposed to be - enjoyable. It's a shame, as it could have been as good as *Formula 1* had it been created with a bit of finesse, but as it stands, steer well clear of it.



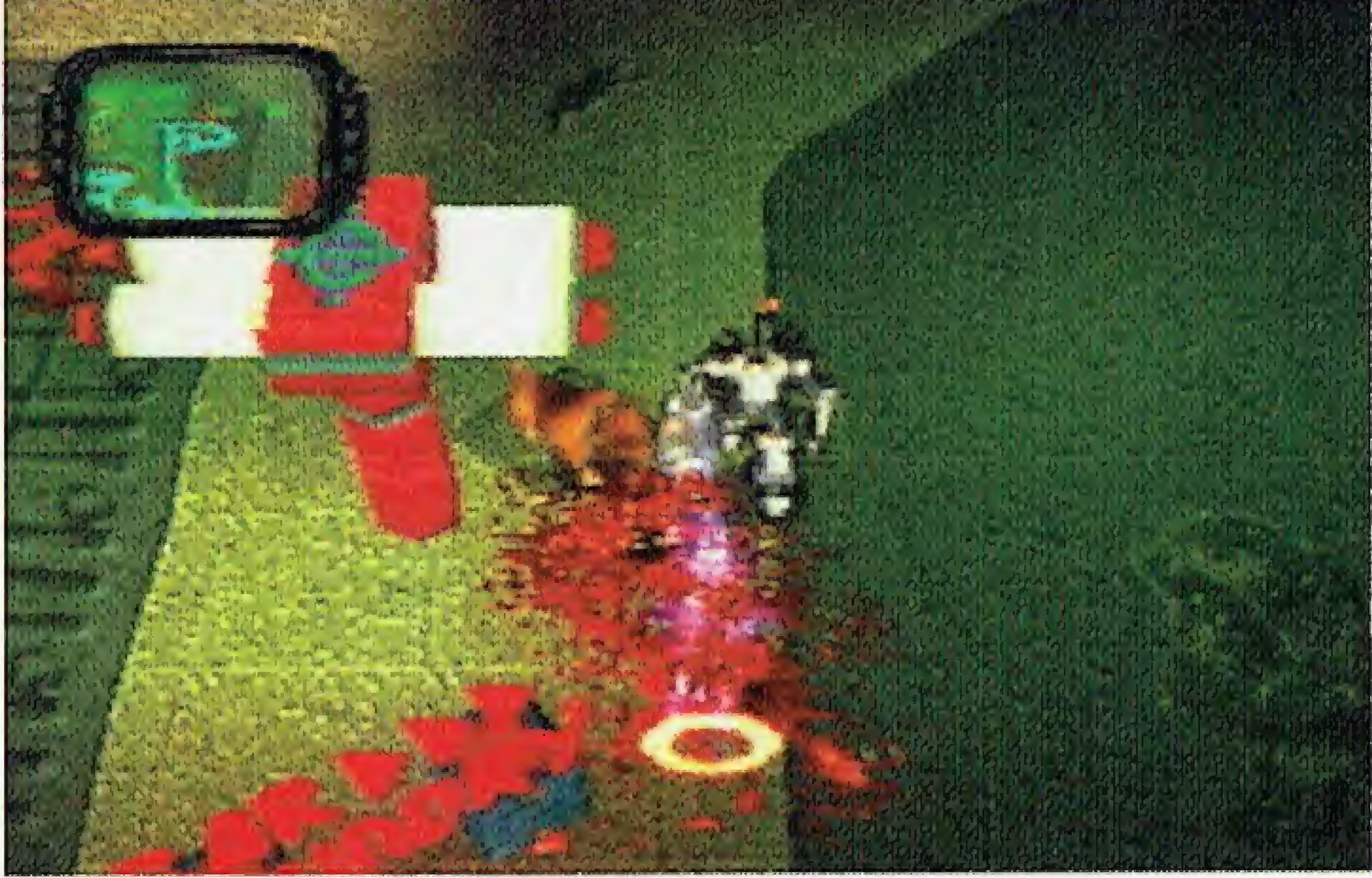
GRAPHICS:	★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★
LIFESPAN:	★
ORIGINALITY:	★

OVERALL: A few years back *Nascar Racing* could have immersed a player into the thrill of the race, but *F1* and *Porsche Challenge* leave it behind in a cloud of dust.

3
OUT OF TEN

Re-Loaded

PUBLISHER:	Gremlin
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Overhead shooter
PLAYERS:	1 or 2
MEMORY CARD:	Save levels
CONTROLLER:	Standard pad
CLASSIFICATION:	M15



The most impressive thing you'll witness on the first level of *Re-Loaded* are the splattering effects when you reduce anything within range to a quivering pile of flesh and blood. But as the game progresses, things get a little more interesting.

This is a top down shooter where total annihilation of the enemy is the primary objective, although there are some puzzles to figure out along the way. You start by choosing one of six psychotic characters, each with their own weapons and ultra bombs.

The usual range of pick-ups are scattered around the playing fields; power ups, ammunition, health and more ultra bombs and, on some levels, key cards, which are needed to open doors. Your weapons are fully automatic, so you can just run around shooting continuously, except when you get a power-up, where your ammunition is limited. Your health and ammo status is indicated in a small window in the top right hand corner of the screen which changes to a map by pressing a button.

One frustrating aspect of the game play is that targeting is difficult since you can only shoot in eight directions. A strafe button has been included, however, which allows you to mow down your enemies quite nicely. The scrolling is all very smooth - you can zoom in and out of the play field and there are some other nice touches. The main problem, though, is the tiny size of the characters. With the view fully zoomed out they look like ants and up close they appear as undistinguished blobs of colour, far from the cool artwork on the cover.

As you progress through the levels, they get bigger and require more brain power than brute force to get through. There are obstacles such as boulders (which you can push around and squash things), as well as teleporters, lifts and conveyor belts to keep you entertained. All of this is carried along with constant techno beats in the background (not by the Poppies, unfortunately), interspersed with that great splattering sound every time you annihilate a foe.

You can play with a friend in two player mode and you have the option to choose whether you can damage each other or not. A handy feature in this mode is that you can teleport the other player into your vicinity if they are lagging too far behind.

Although this game may be a little easy for hard core shooter fans, it should appeal to first time shooters and people who just love carnage. After all, *Re-Loaded* doesn't have a score, just a body count!

GRAPHICS:	★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★
ORIGINALITY:	★

OVERALL: Some good blasting to be had, but there's far too much aimless wandering around to make the game engrossing. As a sequel, *Re-Loaded* is disappointing.

6
OUT OF TEN

Space Jam

PUBLISHER:	Acclaim
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Basketball
PLAYERS:	1 to 2
MEMORY CARD:	Not needed
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



And now, from one of the biggest marketing exercises - er, I mean movies - of the year comes the inevitable game spin-off. To be fair though, *Space Jam* the movie has a plot which just cries out to be turned into a video game. It centres around a basketball tournament with Michael Jordan and various Loony Tunes characters on one side, and five intellectually-challenged alien monsters on the other.

The actual basketball game in *Space Jam* is quite a decent *NBA Jam*-style game, offering a choice between 3 on 3, 2 on 2 or 1 on 1 play. The game is split up with various mini games between quarters in which you have the chance to increase your players' abilities. These sub levels can be turned off, but in a one-player game the power-ups provided will increase your chances against the computer, especially in the intergalactic tournament mode. In a two-player game, however, they can get a little annoying but may provide an entertaining diversion.

While the flow of action in the basketball game is sometimes a little stiff and slow, this is more than made up for by being able to play with the assorted toons, alien freaks and, of course, Michael Jordan himself, making a rare appearance in a video game. Playing as the Toon Squad you are offered a roster of MJ and 11 old favourites including Bugs, Daffy, Sylvester, Porky and Pepe le Pew, among others. The Monsters, on the other hand, have only five players to choose from but make up for their lack of numbers with enormous size. One freak measures up at 17' 9"! This shortage of players makes the two player games less satisfactory than they could have been and gives the impression that the two player option was a bit of an afterthought.

The game is viewed from the side and comes across as being well presented, with clear graphics and cool animations on the special dunks. The music is the sort of video game music/hip hop hybrid you'd expect, and a good running commentary which keeps the game lively and entertaining.

Although this is a far from serious attempt at a basketball game, *Space Jam* is obviously aimed at the younger end of the market with the emphasis on re-creating the fun of the movie, and this it does successfully.



- GRAPHICS: ★★★

■ SOUND: ★★★★★

■ GAMEPLAY: ★★★

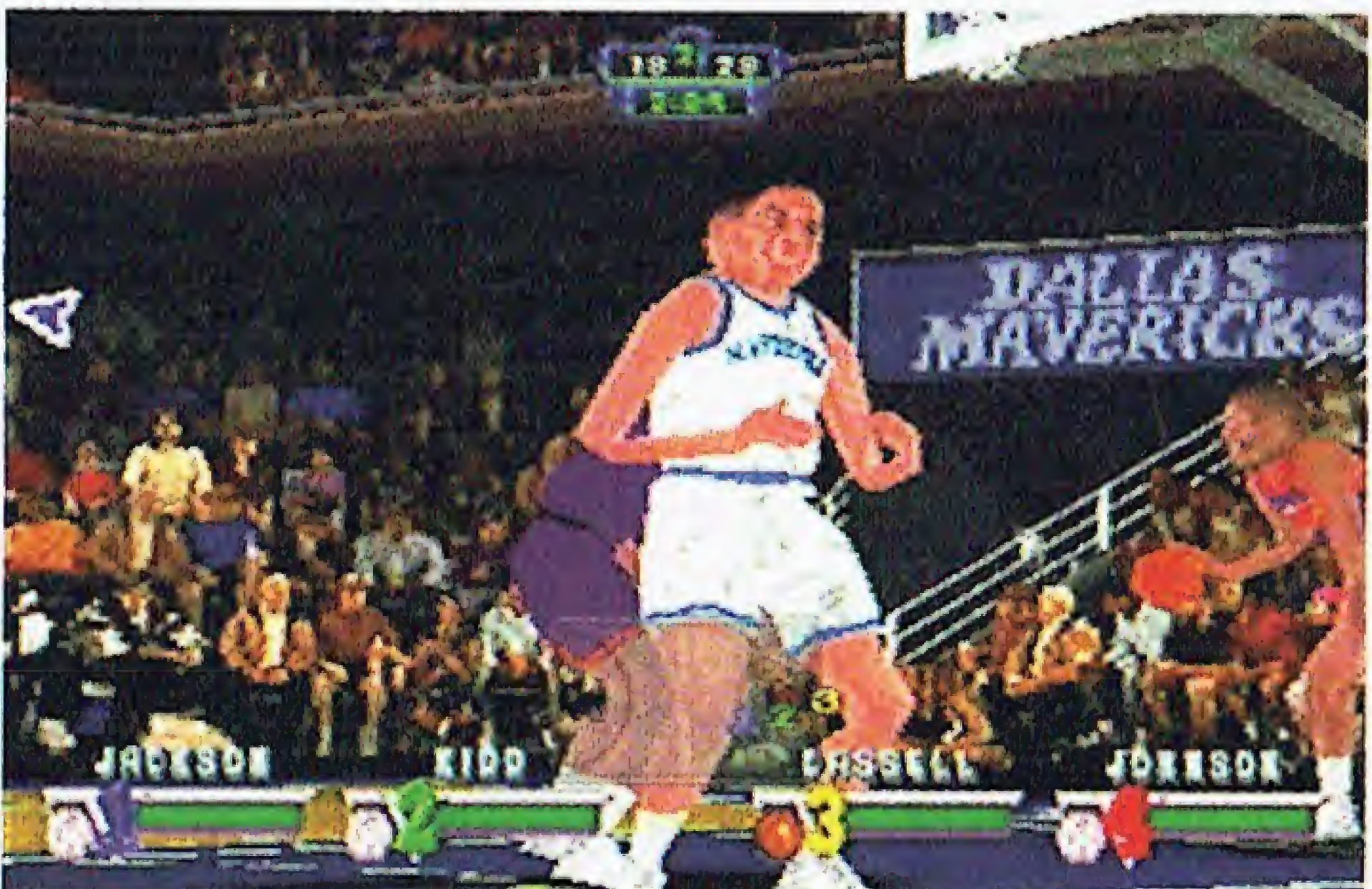
■ LIFESPAN: ★★★

■ ORIGINALITY: ★★
- OVERALL: Combining an easy basketball game with the Loony Tunes and Michael Jordan, *Space Jam* offers everything fans of the movie could want.

7
OUT OF TEN

NBA Jam Extreme

PUBLISHER:	Midway
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Basketball
PLAYERS:	1 to 4
MEMORY CARD:	Not necessary
CONTROLLER:	Joypad Et Multitap
CLASSIFICATION:	G



For years now *NBA Jam* has been one of the most popular and enduring basketball games around. Its blistering pace and massive dunks made it hugely successful both in the arcades and on home systems. Now with the current mania for all things 3D comes *NBA Jam Extreme*.

As a serious fan of both *Jam* and the NBA, I was eagerly awaiting the moment when this game was to be delivered to my grubby hands. However, I soon found that while it does deliver on most of its promises, there are a number of flaws I just wasn't prepared for.

By far the biggest shock was the extreme loading. As most people would know by now, the PlayStation doesn't always have the quickest of loading times, but the delays here are truly lamentable. As well as the loading before the game, you are treated to "Extreme Loading" between every quarter. These periods of inactivity are very long (approximately 45 seconds by my stop watch) and really cause you to lose interest in the game you are playing. Should you be foolish enough to have the game clock speed set to very fast, you may well feel as though you are spending as much time waiting as you do playing the actual game!

Before you turn the page, though, there are actually some quite good things about *NBA Jam Extreme*. With over 170 current players plus 60 hidden characters, there are plenty of options and stats to keep avid fans going. The graphic representation of each of the players is very good and their motions, whilst a little slow, are nice. There are also lots of new dunks to keep you happy. The hoop, however, can be really quite difficult to see and on some of the dunks the ball doesn't even look like it gets close, let alone passes through it. A somewhat more bizarre anomaly is the indoor blimp that is one of the court features. While it is kind of cool, it has the annoying habit of getting in the way and completely obscuring the view.

The game itself, despite the aforementioned problems, plays quite well and in this respect there is definitely a good side to 3D *NBA Jam*. Unfortunately, the developers need to do some serious work on *Extreme* before it can compare favourably with its more successful two dimensional predecessors.



- GRAPHICS: ★★★

■ SOUND: ★★★

■ GAMEPLAY: ★★★

■ LIFESPAN: ★★

■ ORIGINALITY: ★
- OVERALL: As a 3D version of *NBA Jam*, *Extreme* offers an acceptable game of two on two basketball. The extreme loading, however, is far from acceptable.

6
OUT OF TEN

NFL Quarterback Club

PUBLISHER:	Acclaim
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	US Football
PLAYERS:	1 to 4
MEMORY CARD:	Not necessary
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



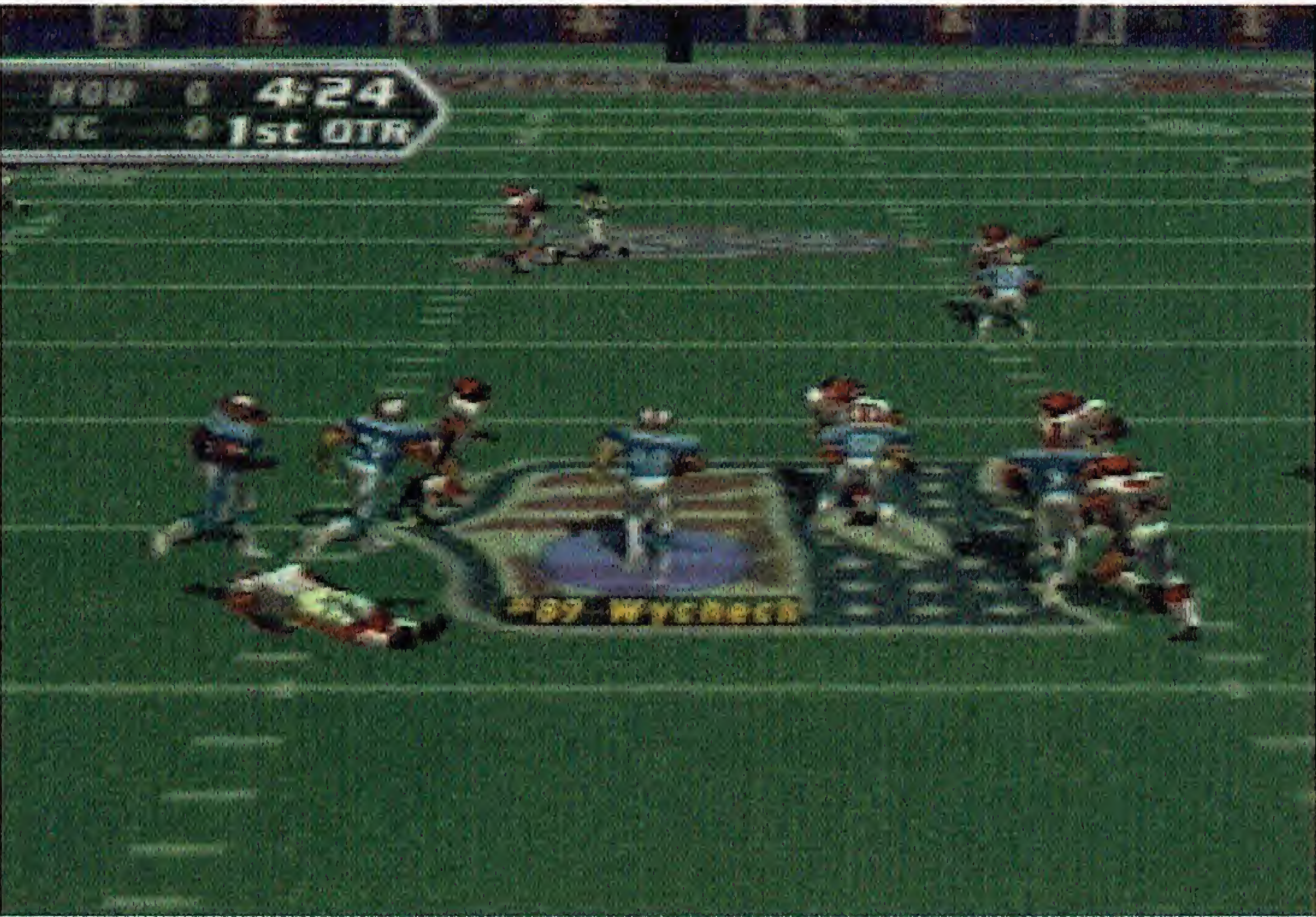
Now that the Superbowl has come and gone, most people in Australia probably have even less of an interest in American football than usual. As mentioned last issue, Acclaim's *Quarterback Club '97* has arrived. So how does it stand up against EA's *Madden '97*?

Both games essentially take the same approach in terms of graphic presentation and play menus, but each has some features not found in the other. One favourable aspect of *Quarterback Club '97* is the option of playing in over 50 different historic simulations. These scenarios are taken primarily from past Superbowls and usually start you midway through the game, giving you the chance to recreate or completely alter the course of NFL history. This feature is obviously aimed at devoted armchair fanatics, but also provides a good starting point if you're just too lazy to choose teams, weather or stadiums.

When you get down to it though, *QC '97* is quite jerky and slow to play. This is particularly annoying, since when you play against the computer, it seems to have no difficulty in executing quick, clean plays. Part of the problem is that the graphics don't allow for very smooth animation. Although the game has one of the most amazing instant replay features I've ever seen, the players are made up of sprites that become blocky and crowded, at times making it difficult to even vaguely see what's going on. The case slip for this game boasts fully rendered 3D stadiums, but they should probably have put a bit more effort into the players. Sometimes their moves are realistic, but more often than not, they look like they're moon walking in zero gravity.

The sound is nothing spectacular, although it does include a curious option which, when playing defence, allows you to get your players to abuse the other team. This can make the two player game amusing, but it's not really what you buy a sports sim for.

QC '97 does have a lot of interesting options, but they aren't backed up by a strong enough game of gridiron. If it were the only American football game on the market, it would be quite acceptable, but when it comes to the crunch *Madden '97*, while far from perfect, will remain the first choice for NFL fans.

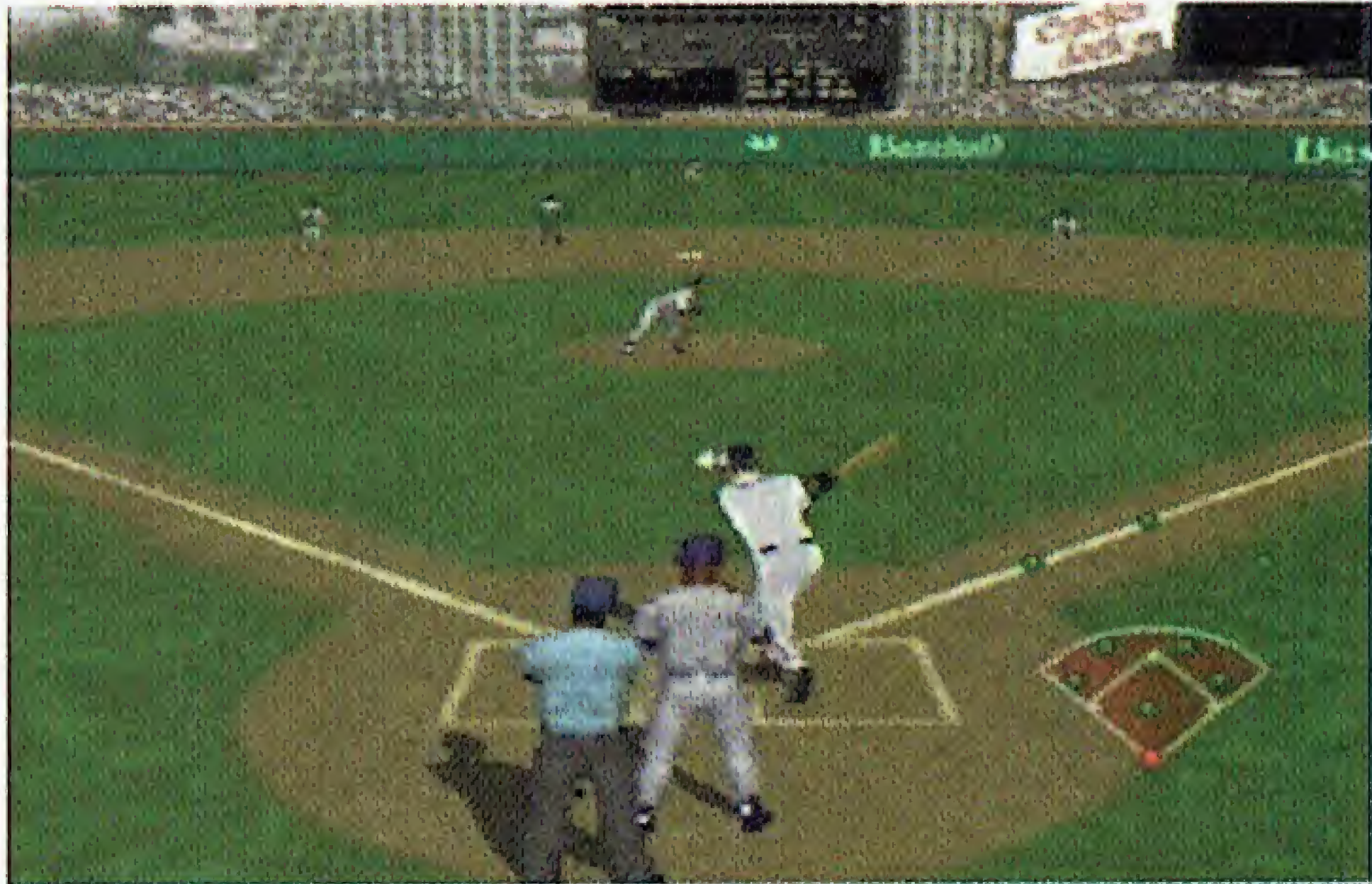


■ GRAPHICS:	★★	■ OVERALL: Quarterback Club '97 is a competent simulation of American football, but is let down by rough graphics. Only for devoted gridiron freaks.
■ SOUND:	★★	
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	
■ ORIGINALITY:	★	

6
OUT OF TEN

Frank Thomas Big Hurt

PUBLISHER:	Acclaim
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Baseball
PLAYERS:	1 to 2
MEMORY CARD:	Not necessary
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Baseball is one of those sports that, despite being unbelievably tedious and drawn out in reality, actually makes for quite a decent video game. As there's not much to it other than timing your swing/pitch and hoping you don't get caught, the mechanics of the game have to be pretty much spot-on so your skills aren't hampered by poor control, resulting in outbursts such as "But I hit the damned button; why didn't he move in time?"

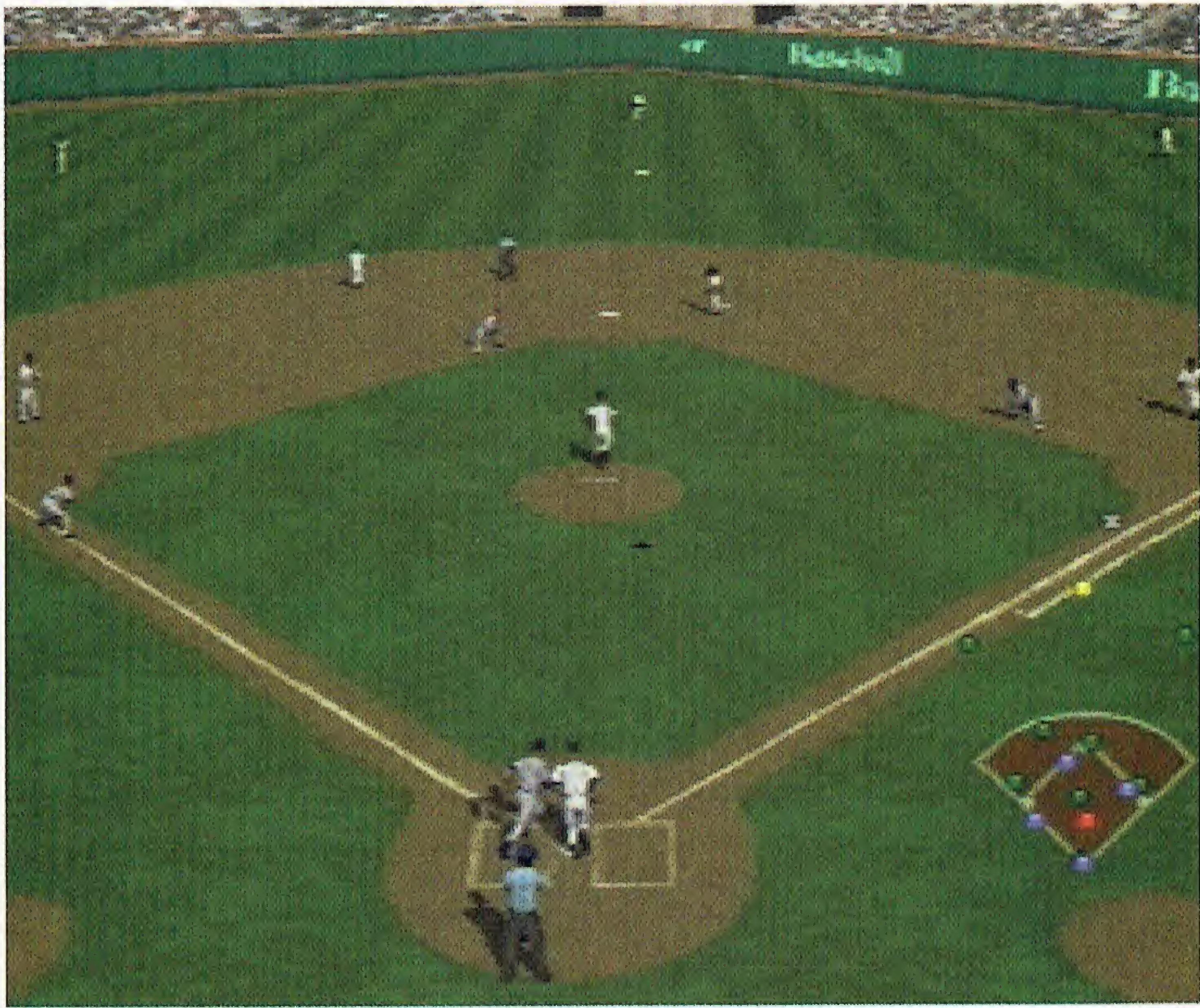
Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball offers a fine selection of modes to play in, such as exhibition, season, play-off, all-star and home run derby, and includes regulation play and "one strike and you're out" quick play. There's also the mandatory batting practice segment for learning how to time your swing.

All the American League and National League players and major stadiums are included, with more than enough stats and substitution options to keep even the most demented baseball fan happy.

Big Hurt looks more or less the same as every other baseball game before it with the standard view behind the batter. The graphics are nothing exceptional and the actions of the players are a bit dodgy, but otherwise perform adequately. Likewise, the stadiums are all quite good, but how much product placement do we have to put up with in our games?

The sound effects are bearable, but after a while the commentary gets to sound pretty stilted, and you'll soon want to land a home run in the gob of the hot dog seller! When it comes to the music, let me just say that I hastily engaged one of the many options and silenced it shortly after starting.

Despite these lapses in presentation, *Big Hurt* provides quite a good game of baseball. Pitching and batting are easily accomplished after a little practice, and with fielding you can choose between manual or automatic, although either way tends to have mixed results.



■ GRAPHICS:	★★	■ OVERALL: Baseball may be just too boring for most people, but if you're after a decent sports game <i>Big Hurt</i> should satisfy your needs.
■ SOUND:	★★	
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	
■ ORIGINALITY:	★	

6
OUT OF TEN

Tiger Shark

PUBLISHER:	GT
RELEASE:	TBA
PRICE:	TBA
GAME TYPE:	3D shoot 'em up
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Not necessary
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	TBA



Years from now an ever burgeoning population will place a heavy strain on the Earth's once vast natural resources. Turning to the oceans, a plan to devise a way to harness its power is formulated and Japan pushes for a new geo-thermal system to be trialed. During the trial however, a flaw in the design sets off a gigantic earthquake which results in the sinking of most of Japan, with much of its population being drowned. It turns out that the catastrophe was part of a mad scheme by a Russian Admiral to take over the world. The loony commie has set thermal taps in strategic parts of the world's oceans and unless he is stopped, similar disasters will befall the rest of the world. The Tigershark, an advanced sea craft capable of travelling above or below the ocean surface, is the only hope to defeat the admiral.

At the helm of the Tigershark, you must infiltrate enemy territory and try to stop the destruction of the world. The sub is capable of attacking the enemy from the surface or below, so many strategies must be learnt.

Fast, powerful and armed to the hilt with the latest weapons, it's a shoot-first-ask-questions-later affair. There's a standard machine gun mounted on the Tigershark, as well as three types of missiles at your disposal. When you have an enemy in sight, a wire frame appears around them which changes colour and as you inflict damage upon them. After defeating particular targets, power-ups appear which replenish the Tigershark's weapons or armour.

The enemy vessels are fast, tough and at times quite intelligent. A problem you'll face is that even on the easier setting, during combat there are always at least two or three bogies attacking from all directions. It can be very frustrating when this happens as you tend to waste a lot of time chasing them around in circles.

The graphics look a lot better under the water than they do above, with an eerie sort of atmosphere as you dive among submerged skyscrapers. There are three different view points; in the cockpit, from behind the Tigershark and a totally pointless view which has you viewing your ship from a fixed point.

Tigershark offers a new perspective on the tried and tested combat warfare simulation games, and while there is already a whole slew of similar flight type games available on PlayStation, there are none as yet which stand above the rest. This is the only real problem with Tigershark, there is nothing exceptional about it. The novelty of being able to wage war above and below the waves wears thin fairly quickly, but if you're after a fast paced shooter you could do a lot worse than Tigershark.



GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★
ORIGINALITY:	★★★

OVERALL: *Tigershark* is a thoroughly challenging shoot 'em up, but under the surface there isn't much that makes it stand out.

7

OUT OF TEN

X2

PUBLISHER:	Ocean
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Shooter
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	Passwords
CLASSIFICATION:	G



A few years ago, during the reign of the Super NES and the Megadrive, it seemed as if every second game released was a side-scrolling shoot 'em up. These days, however, the 32-bit market has been swamped with every conceivable type of 3D fighting and driving game (and those damn platform games). It seems as if the days of flying through space from left to right blowing the snot out of everything are over. With the release of X2, however, Team 17 has emphatically squashed that idea.

X2 marks a return to a classic and simple video game concept of "here come the aliens, take this spaceship and kill them all". No mangy marsupials, plumbers or brainless muscle men, just screen after screen of shooting things for no real reason. This, of course, makes it quite addictive.

So how much does X2 advance upon and differ from the classic shooters such as *Hellfire*, *ThunderForce 3*, *Axelay* and the king of all shooters, *Parodius*? The answer is... not a lot. The only real difference is that in X2 you sometimes turn and scroll vertically for a while. However, while it offers nothing new, what it does offer has been given a fresh coat of shiny paint.

The graphics throughout X2 are traditional shooter game in style, but with the PlayStation's extra processing power, the results are far beyond your average shooter. One of the big problems with 16-bit shooters was that they slowed down when the screen got too congested, but in X2, it happily scrolls along - even when there are so many weird spaceships and objects sumptuously exploding that you can hardly see your own ship! The music in X2 is dated sounding techno, but it's inoffensive enough. The sound effects are really quite good, and definitely warrant the effort of plugging in your stereo.

Passwords are provided, so you don't have to restart from the beginning every time. Once you get to level five (out of ten) however, there are no more passwords so you must resume from that point. When you die you continue from that point, but due to the sheer number of things on screen at the same time, dying is a regular occurrence.

As one of the first traditional shooters to be released on PlayStation, X2 is bound to be well received by fans of the style. Sure, it's probably not the greatest game to ever appear, but it's fast, addictive, explosive, and above all, fun. It doesn't make any difference to the game, but X2 also has one of the best fully rendered intros seen to date.



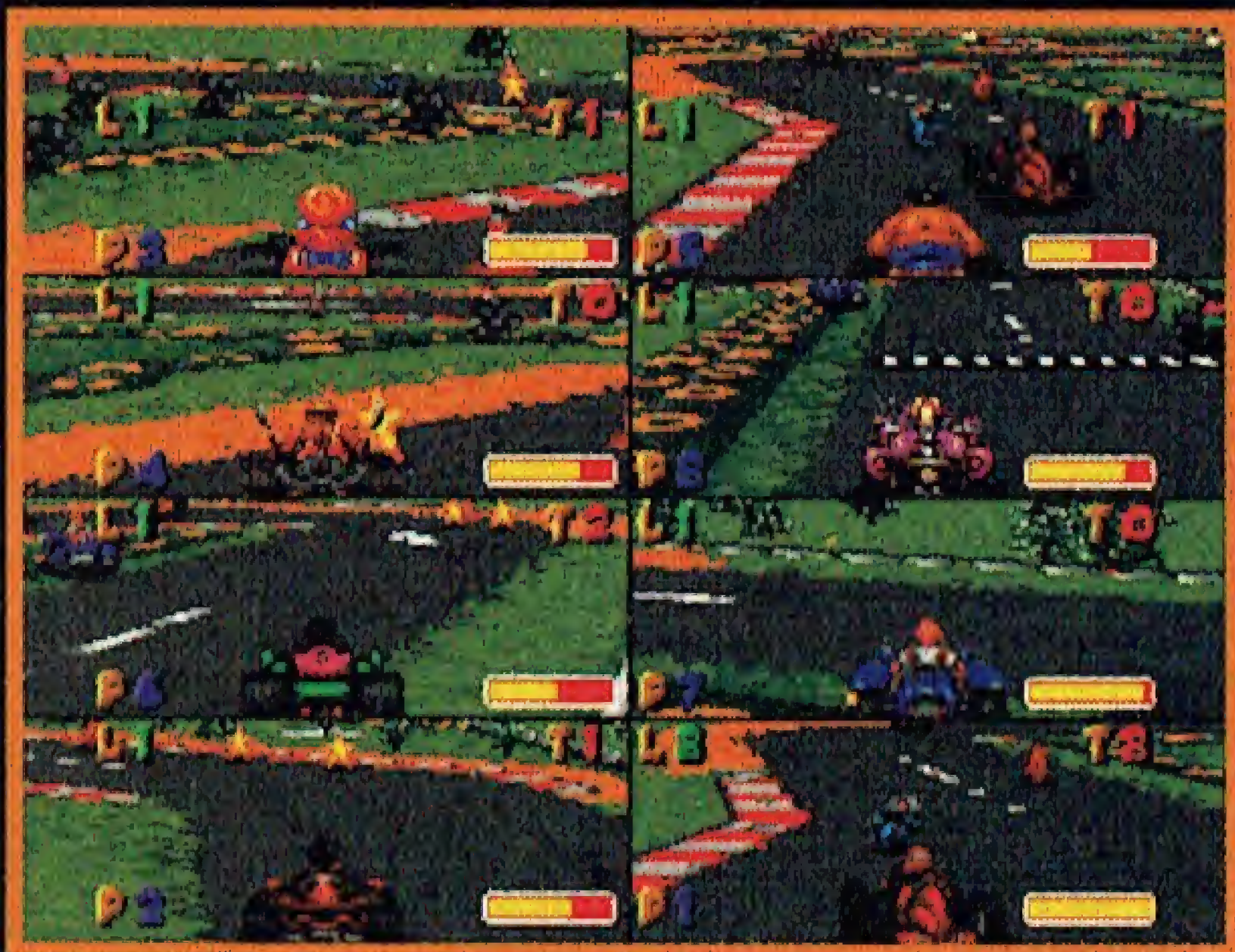
GRAPHICS:	★★★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★
ORIGINALITY:	★

OVERALL: *X2* is a welcome return to the days when video games were all about power-ups and keeping your thumb firmly on the fire button.

7

OUT OF TEN

STREET RACER™



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Animated Violence



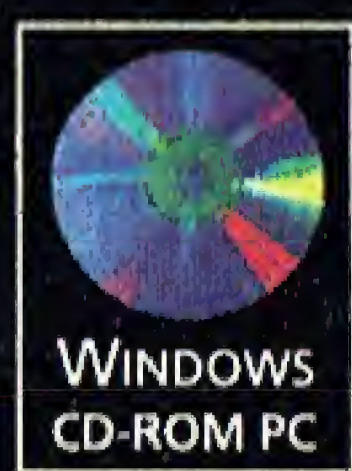
a full 3D environment...



over 24 challenging
tracks...



an unbelievable race !



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Burning Road

PUBLISHER:	Funsoft
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Racing
PLAYERS:	One, link-up
MEMORY CARD:	Not necessary
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Got some pent up road rage to relieve? Don't take it out on the next Volvo driver. Instead, grab a copy of *Burning Road* for some intense therapy and get your virtual revenge!

Burning Road is best described as arcade-style rally racing, with three tracks to race on and a selection of cars varying in the handling and acceleration departments. The graphics are very fast and give you a the sensation of hurtling around the tracks at great speed. At the same time, the course scenery scrolls smoothly and is varied and colourful. The addition of weather gives the game further variety with conditions such as rain and snow causing the track to become very slippery in places. The sounds are suitably noisy, with strong, loud revving engines and crunching noises as the cars land after massive jumps. The music is your typical rockin' soundtrack - you either love it or get sick of it after the hundredth time - but it does the job and is in keeping with the feel of the game.

If keeping up with the CPU drivers becomes a hassle as they effortlessly glide around the track passing you, simply ram their cars into an embankment or wall and cause them some serious damage! After a few hard knocks their wheels start to wobble and slow them down, but the same will happen to you if you're not careful. The other racers are not the only opposition to your progress. Helicopters and light aircraft periodically drop obstacles in your path in a bid to slow you down.

To become champion you must finish each of the three tracks within the time allotted at the beginning of the race. Throughout the game there are check points, which you must pass through to earn a time extension. When you manage to complete the race within the time limit, you may qualify for the next course, but you don't need to place in the top three to progress, although a higher placing will give you a higher bonus score.

Burning Road doesn't offer anything radically new and the small number of tracks and limited depth to the driving reduce its longevity as a one player game. It does, however, convey a good sensation of speed and if you are looking for an enjoyable racing game with link cable capability, this is well worth a look.



GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★
ORIGINALITY:	★

OVERALL: Yet another average racing game, but *Burning Road* is worth a look for the great two player link challenge.

6
OUT OF TEN

WWF in your house

PUBLISHER:	Acclaim
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Beat 'em up
PLAYERS:	1 to 4
MEMORY CARD:	Not needed
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	M15



Despite never really catching on in this country, professional wrestling is big business in many other parts of the globe, particularly in America and Japan. As a result, there is a plethora of video game opportunities to deal with these quite strange big men in tights who make a living belting the living snot out of each other.

WWF In Your House is the latest title to join the ranks, and with its World Wrestling Federation endorsement and "ten of the greatest superstars the WWF has ever known" (What about Randy "Macho Man" Savage and Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake? - Ed.), it would initially appear to be on the right track. But these days, with the enormous number of above-average 2D and 3D beat 'em up titles being released, does the world really need another 2D wrestling game?

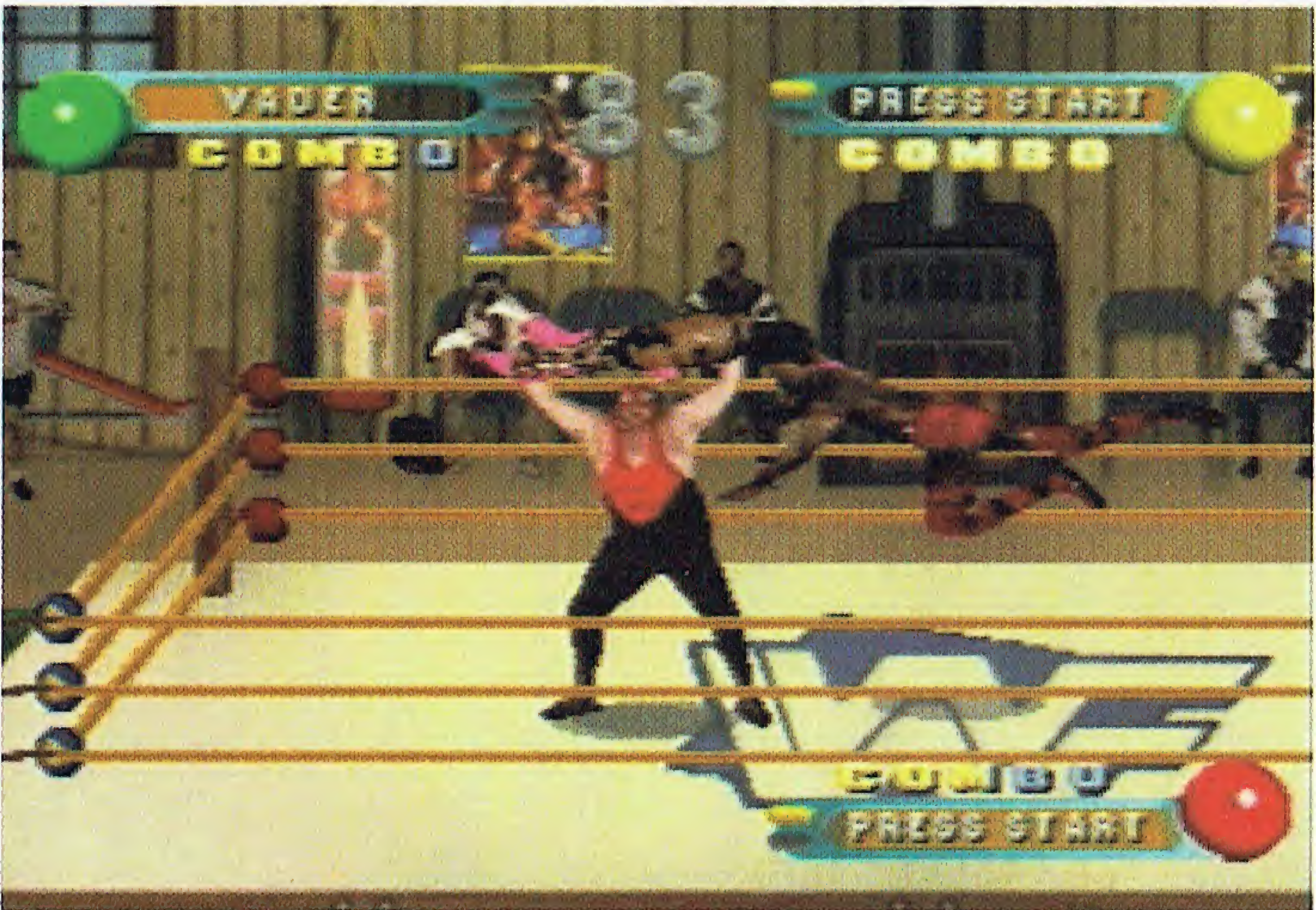
The makers of this game seem to be aware of this problem and have included special moves for each character, presumably in the hope of capturing some of the fighting game market. Their time would probably have been better spent on improving the quality and variety of the basic wrestling moves.

Even though this game promises loads of special moves and button combos, when you actually play the game you'll find yourself just trying to get in close enough and to push the buttons as quickly as possible. This tends to wear out your fingers pretty quickly, but by this stage your brain will have gone elsewhere anyway.

The animation owes a lot to those old Rankin Bass cartoons with a bare minimum of movement in the wrestlers' stiff joints. The sound, however, fits in well with appropriate music, good running commentary during fights and a cavalcade of grunts, groans and bodily disruptions.

There are various ways to set up the fights such as tag team, solo, etc., but most of the action in one player games gets pretty dull quite quickly. It's only when playing against a friend that any enjoyment is to be had.

Despite their different appearances, the wrestlers all have very similar moves and the graphics look like they would be more at home on a Megadrive than on a 32-bit machine.



GRAPHICS:	★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★
LIFESPAN:	★
ORIGINALITY:	★★

OVERALL: *WWF In Your House* is noisy, flashy and very insubstantial. Just like the real thing.

4
OUT OF TEN

Supersonic Racers

PUBLISHER:	Mindscape
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Racing
PLAYERS:	1 to 8 Multi-tap
MEMORY CARD:	Not necessary
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



If you were foolish enough to believe the preposterous guff printed on the back of the case, you might be under the impression that you were on the verge of playing one of the best driving games of all time. But, as usual, the amount of hype on the packet is inversely proportional to the quality of its contents.

There are only so many options available to creators of driving games, but this has not stopped a seemingly endless barrage of very similar driving games appearing on the scene over the years. As a result, any new ones can easily be placed into one of a few generic categories. Unfortunately, *Supersonic Racers* comes under the heading of "Shameless *Micro Machines* Rip-off". What's really sad is that it doesn't even manage to succeed at this.

As well as cars, the various stages include their own modes of transport such as hovercrafts, zeppelins, spaceships, etc. This is where *Supersonic Racers* almost has a brush with originality. The biggest problem with the game, however, is the utter mediocrity of the courses. Besides being incredibly short, they are quite remarkably tedious, with too many of them being very simple closed circuits. In their favour, however, the tracks are fairly nicely presented with clear, colourful scenery and smooth camera panning following the progress of your car. The view of the cars is from overhead and you can change it slightly, but it would have been nice if some sort of zoom option had been included.

On first playing this game, it doesn't take very long to get sick of all the courses. Perhaps the multi-player action might make up for this and other inadequacies. Often it is the case with average racing games that the two-player option offers far more of an attraction than single-player games. Sadly this is not the case here. The most enjoyment to be had is not so much beating your opponent to the finish line, but trying to force them out of the race. Even though the cars all handle fairly well, someone seems to have forgotten to make the game entertaining.

Oddly enough, the sound is quite good and almost makes some of the levels bearable. In the end, though, all but the youngest players will tire of this game pretty quickly and if weird little cars are your thing you might be better off exploring *Street Racers* or *Micro Machines 3*.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★
■ SOUND:	★★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★

■ OVERALL: *Supersonic Racers* can only be recommended to young players and those with a very short attention span.

5
OUT OF TEN

Chessmaster 3D

PUBLISHER:	Mindscape
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Chess
PLAYERS:	1 to 2
MEMORY CARD:	Not necessary
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Have your thumbs become swollen lumps of meat from playing too many fighting games? Are your eyeballs slowly melting down your face after excessive sessions on *Wipeout*? Would you rather step off a cliff than onto another platform? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then it may well be time to don the comfy slippers and velvet smoking jacket and step into the world of the *Chessmaster*.

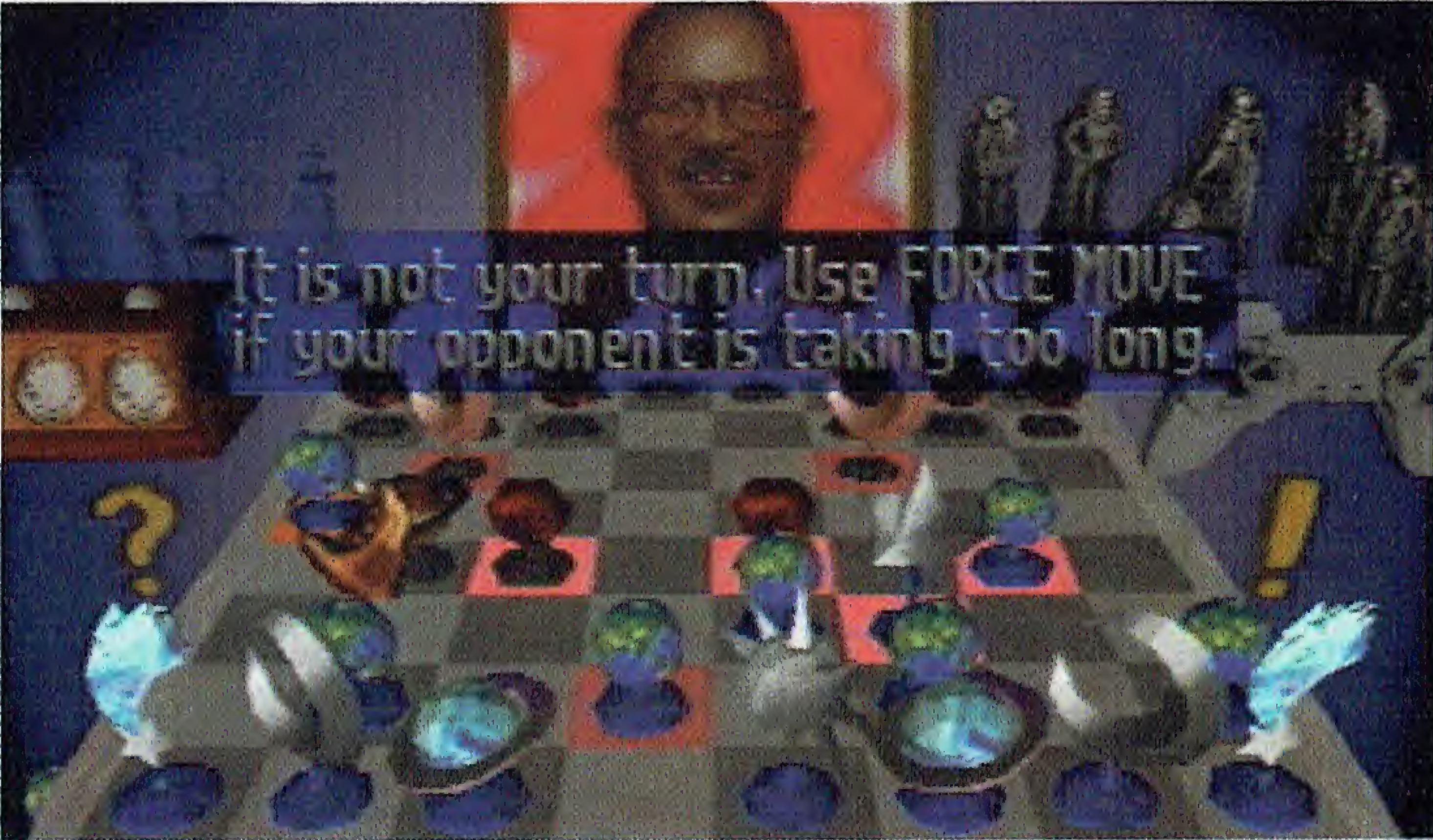
Whilst a chess game may not seem to have the instant appeal of flashy high promotion titles, this is exactly the point. The game of chess is a thousand times more thoughtful than the average video game, and the PlayStation edition of Mindscape's *Chessmaster* series shows that there is still a place for "real" games in this age of technology.

To keep the appearance of the game fresh, *Chessmaster* has taken the expected leap into the third dimension. While there could have been some more dramatic animation of the pieces, it does offer a fully rotatable chess board that can be moved to enough angles to keep anyone happy, as well as offering six different sets to play with. Although these graphic features add nothing to the game of chess itself, they do offer a bit of variety and some of them look quite spectacular. In addition to the 3D presentation, there is a more traditional computer chess perspective in the War Room section.

The sound, however, is a curious affair, containing a range of music from baroque and classical to acid beats. While they are all fairly unobtrusive, you can't choose the music you want and there tends to be an overlap on the loops, although this is obviously a cosmetic point and doesn't interfere with the game.

Chessmaster 3D offers a dozen computer opponents which cover the full gamut of skill levels. Beginner players have been included so that even a rank amateur can beat someone, and would-be Kasparovs can challenge the mighty Chessmaster himself. In addition to choosing your opponent, you can customize many facets of the CPU intelligence, as well as various on-screen aids if you don't feel too confident about your playing abilities.

Chessmaster 3D provides a solid game of chess and doesn't pretend to be any more exciting than the real thing. If you're after a good chess game this has just about everything you could want, but did you really buy a PlayStation so you could play board games?



■ GRAPHICS:	★★★
■ SOUND:	★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★

■ OVERALL: *Chessmaster 3D* offers a fine game of chess and should keep devotees of the game happy for quite some time. But chess on the PlayStation? Get a life!

6
OUT OF TEN

The Incredible Hulk

PUBLISHER:	Eidos
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Arcade
DIFFICULTY:	Medium
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	No
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



Basing a game on The Incredible Hulk can be a hit and miss affair. If you look at his powers, you'll find there isn't really a lot that can stop him. Eidos, however, has taken a somewhat risky approach and toned down his invulnerability for the purposes of adapting him to a game. Based on various plots and stories which have appeared in The Hulk's comic books, there are 14 different missions taking place in different parts of the world. Each of these missions require The Hulk to either explore a level and track down the main enemy, or solve a small puzzle which reveals the exit.

It's pretty well known that The Incredible Hulk is mean and green, living by the philosophy of "Smash now, ask questions later". As you would expect, there are plenty of things to smash in this game. Crates and boulders can be picked up and thrown at enemies to destroy them, or at least damage major foes. When items are smashed, icons sometimes appear which replenish The Hulk's energy or refill his Special Powers bar.

The Hulk has around 40 moves he can perform, including punching, kicking, an uppercut and stomping. There are many special moves that can be done; however, these take away from Hulk's Special Powers bar. Among these are Hulk's patented hand slap, which sends shock waves in the direction he is facing. There is also a spinning clothesline type move and a ground punch that damages any enemies nearby.

While travelling through the levels, an enemy's name will appear opposite Hulk's health bar. This signifies that they are nearby, so it's a good idea to stock up on energy and power. When they do appear, they usually attack straight away, with each character replicating its abilities from the comics. The Hulk's opponents are fairly easy to dispose of, and can be taken care of quite effortlessly by letting them walk into your fist and repeatedly punching them. That's the robots and other general types of foe taken care of, but some of the stronger ones can pose more of a problem, as the overhead view makes judging attack distances difficult. Enemies may appear to be directly in front of you yet you can be punching them and nothing actually connects. They, on the other hand, seem to have no problem getting their shots in. The angle at which the game is viewed also makes it difficult to judge distances, especially when jumping from ledge to ledge or across gaps.

If you own Incredible Hulk bed sheets, a Hulk lunch box or bendable action figure, possibly you'll glean some entertainment from this.



■ GRAPHICS:	★★
■ SOUND:	★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★

■ OVERALL: Faithful to the comic, yes. Entertaining and original, no.

4
OUT OF TEN

NHL Face Off '97

PUBLISHER:	Sony
RELEASE:	March
PRICE:	\$69.95
GAME TYPE:	Ice hockey
PLAYERS:	1 - 8 Multi tap
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Ice Hockey games have been big sellers on the console market for quite a few years now, so it should come as no surprise to find that there is now an absurd number of games to choose from, all claiming to be better, faster, have more polygons etc. In addition to this, there is the perpetual update scenario where companies feel obliged to churn out a sequel with updated rosters once a year, even if there is little change from the previous incarnation. With so many competitors vying for your cash, the question remains, does *NHL Face Off '97* cut the mustard, or merely the cheese?

Let me just start off by saying that if there were no other NHL games available, this game would be quite adequate. It contains all the NHL teams plus All-Star teams, as well as enough options and angles to provide a fast, decent game of ice hockey.

Unfortunately, however, it does have some small problems. One of the most instantly noticeable points in which *NHL Face Off '97* is lacking is that the players are sprite based and, in this polygon fixated world, that may well be enough to turn many potential purchasers away.

Regardless of their graphical composition, the players are smoothly animated, yet true precision control is sadly lacking. Don't be mistaken, it's quite easy to play and score, it's just the whole game is a little wonky. The thing that will really put the over-ripe camembert in your favourite slippers is that every time you start a game of any description, you are forced to endure the final four lines of the American national anthem as the game loads. Every time. Every single time, with no way of skipping through. Even if you get to the game before the anthem is finished, your players skate around aimlessly until the last note has sounded. While the rest of the game sound is fairly decent, it sometimes doesn't bare too much resemblance to the on-screen action.

There is nothing really bad about *Face Off '97* (other than the crap music and graphics), it's just that with the high level of competition in this market, it starts to look rather dated and somewhat average. The main disappointment is that it doesn't look any better than the '96 version. It still provides a fairly decent game of hockey, but you could do a lot better by investigating EA's *NHL '97* or Virgin's *Power Play*.



■ GRAPHICS:	★★
■ SOUND:	★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★

■ OVERALL: *NHL Face Off '97* is a poor improvement on last year's version. It looks awful and doesn't play much better. Miss out on this and enjoy life!

5
OUT OF TEN

the best



in shoes



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change the game

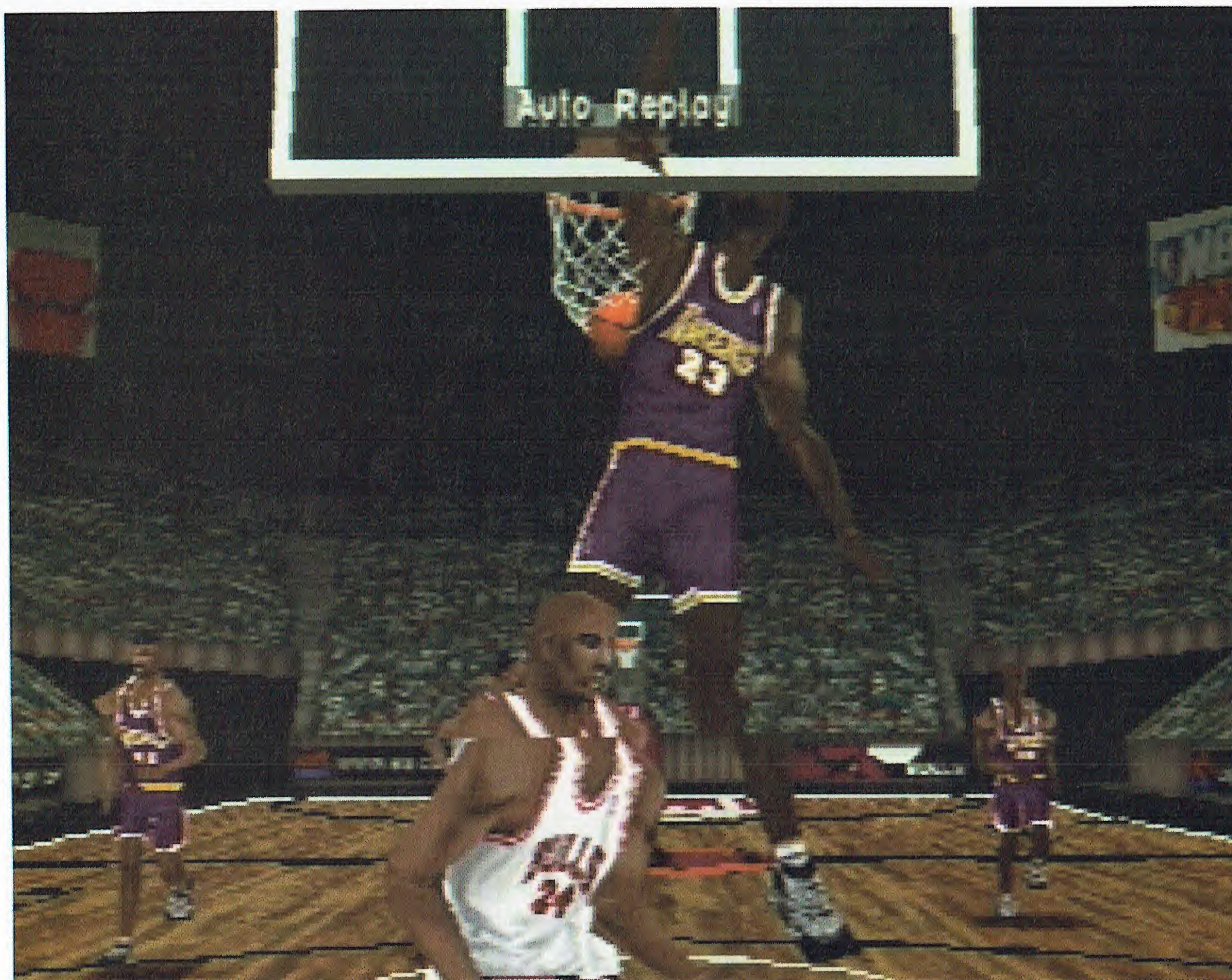


FILA is available at: Sportsco, Footlocker, Insport, Jim Kidd and selected stores.

NBA Live '97

After many hot, sweaty weeks stuck in his vinyl armchair, **Adrian Bertram** emerges victorious after a full season of NBA action.

PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$99.95
PLAYERS:	1 to 8
MEMORY CARD:	Save season
CONTROLLER:	Multitap
CLASSIFICATION:	G



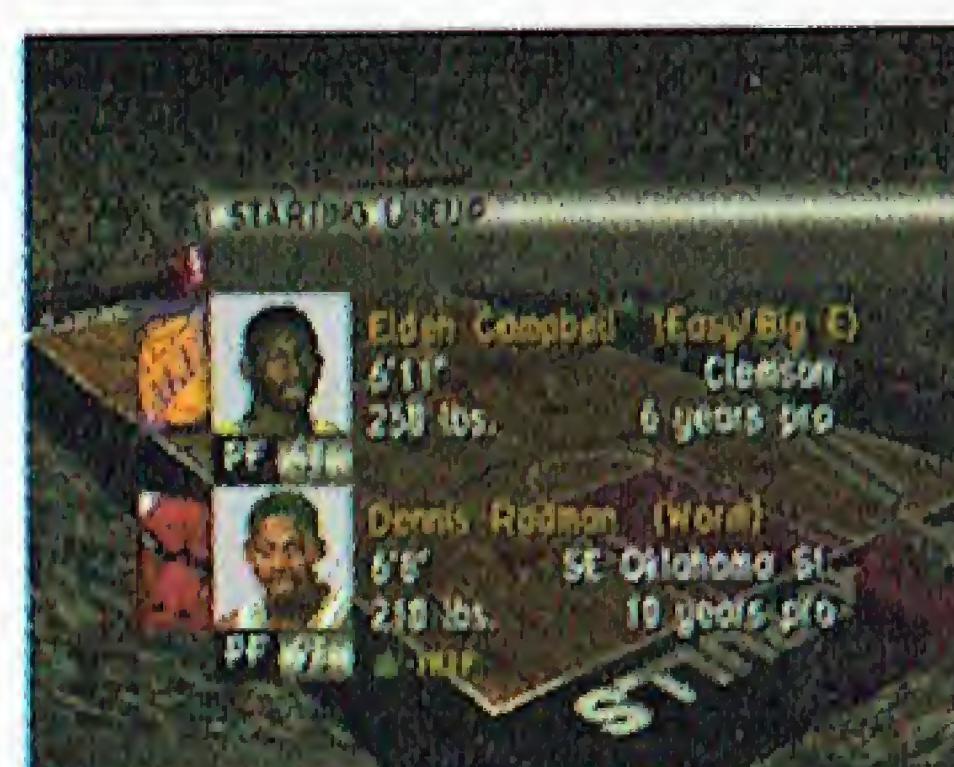
"Aarrhg! Me shin just snapped in half!" Don't worry, it's a clean break. Just take it easy for the next few games.

It's really quite difficult to know where to begin in praising this game. For years, fans of full team basketball simulations have had to deal with slow, jerky play and overcrowded screens while the market for *NBA Jam* and other similar games with fast paced action and comedy dunks ensured that endless variations of the 2 on 2 game were released. Now, however, fans of true basketball simulations have been rewarded for their patience with the release of EA's *NBA Live '97*. Without a doubt, this game has more features and attention to detail than any other sport sim I've ever seen, and combines this with smooth and fast action.

The difference between a good game and a great game is how it stands up to long term gameplay. In this regard, *NBA Live '97* truly passes the test. As well as the opportunity to improve your skills, long term play gives you the option of playing a full season of various lengths - up to 100+ games for a full NBA season plus playoffs. Success in this game is not merely a case of choosing the best team and utterly destroying all your opponents as is the case with some sports sims. As your skills improve, the gameplay improves with you. If you are on a huge winning streak, other teams will start rising to the challenge, and

the better your overall record, the harder it is to improve upon it.

One of the best features of *NBA Live '97*, though, is its ability to switch between arcade style action - with no fouls and very few rules, or full simulation mode with all the normal basketball rules. In addition, you can customize the settings so pedantic rules like illegal defence, or whichever rule happens to be annoying you at the time can be removed. Diehard NBA fans will be pleased to know that the rosters included in the game were correct as of 25/9/96, and that almost all the players in the league are there - although it seems that even EA can't afford the



Worm boy Rodman shows off his new moss hairpiece (top).



Boston about to take an early lead (left). If you're happy and you know it clap you hands (centre). The auto replay shows who let their side down (right).

BASKETBALL HEAD TO HEAD PLAY TEST



Excuse me, Dennis, I think you're like, going the wrong way, or something (left). Oi! You in the white, you're also going the wrong way! (right)

rights to Michael Jordan or Charles Barkley. In addition, you also have the option of trading players between teams and can even create your own customised players from scratch.

The presentation of the actual game is really quite breathtaking. The players' moves have been motion captured from actual NBA players, and the resulting movement is smooth and provides a level of realism rarely seen in a sports sim. Whilst usually full team basketball games get a little too crowded to see what's actually happening, *NBA Live '97* has a ridiculous number of camera angles and zoom factors to choose from to keep even the fussiest player satisfied.

Another factor which adds to the realism of the game is the truly impressive sound. Realistic game announcements help you keep track of the game whilst the crowd surges across your speakers and even the option screen music is surprisingly funky. Add this to the traditional grunts and sneaker squeaks and the sound is complete.

So, the game has every conceivable rule, option, stat, fine graphics and sound, but how does it actually play? The answer is magnificently. Control of the players is kept to a minimum of buttons, but there are enough advanced features, such as calling plays, that the gameplay remains fresh even after extended play. After playing for several weeks now, I'm still finding new moves and haven't even really explored the play calling options at all.

One further point which should be mentioned is that unlike so many other PlayStation titles, this game does not have a problem with loading times.

Once you have selected your teams and set your options and arrived at the actual game, you don't have to deal with extra loading screens getting in the way of game continuity.

Of course, even a game this good has to have slight problems, but in this case I have only two minor complaints: 1. The graphics are a little blocky when closely examined, although the motion more than makes up for this. 2. There is no real option for a quick game. The shortest match takes approximately half an hour. But this is real basketball, and if you wanted a quick game you'd probably be playing something else.



As this picture clearly shows, this white man can't jump. Well, if he can he doesn't want to (left). Huyuuuunnngggguuunnnnggggaaahhhhhh - pop! (right)

Head to Head

It's a rare treat indeed to have two such high quality games to choose between. *NBA Live '97* and *Total NBA '97* are both excellent representations of the game of basketball and offer a wealth of fine production values and good long term play. The choice of which game is better essentially comes down to personal choice. The games are very similar in many ways and becomes a matter of the respective producers' approach to the game itself. Both games have been designed to appeal to those interested in a fast arcade game as well as those more interested in a complete simulation, with both games including a rule customising option allowing you to create a hybrid of the two. On closer examination, however, each game has its own personal flavour. Total's commitment to graphics and spectacular slam dunks is more likely to

CONTINUED

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Probably the most life-like animation seen in a sports game
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Sounds just like the real thing
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★	Does everything you could want it to
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★★	How long can you sit in front of your TV playing it?
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★	The most accurate basketball simulation so far

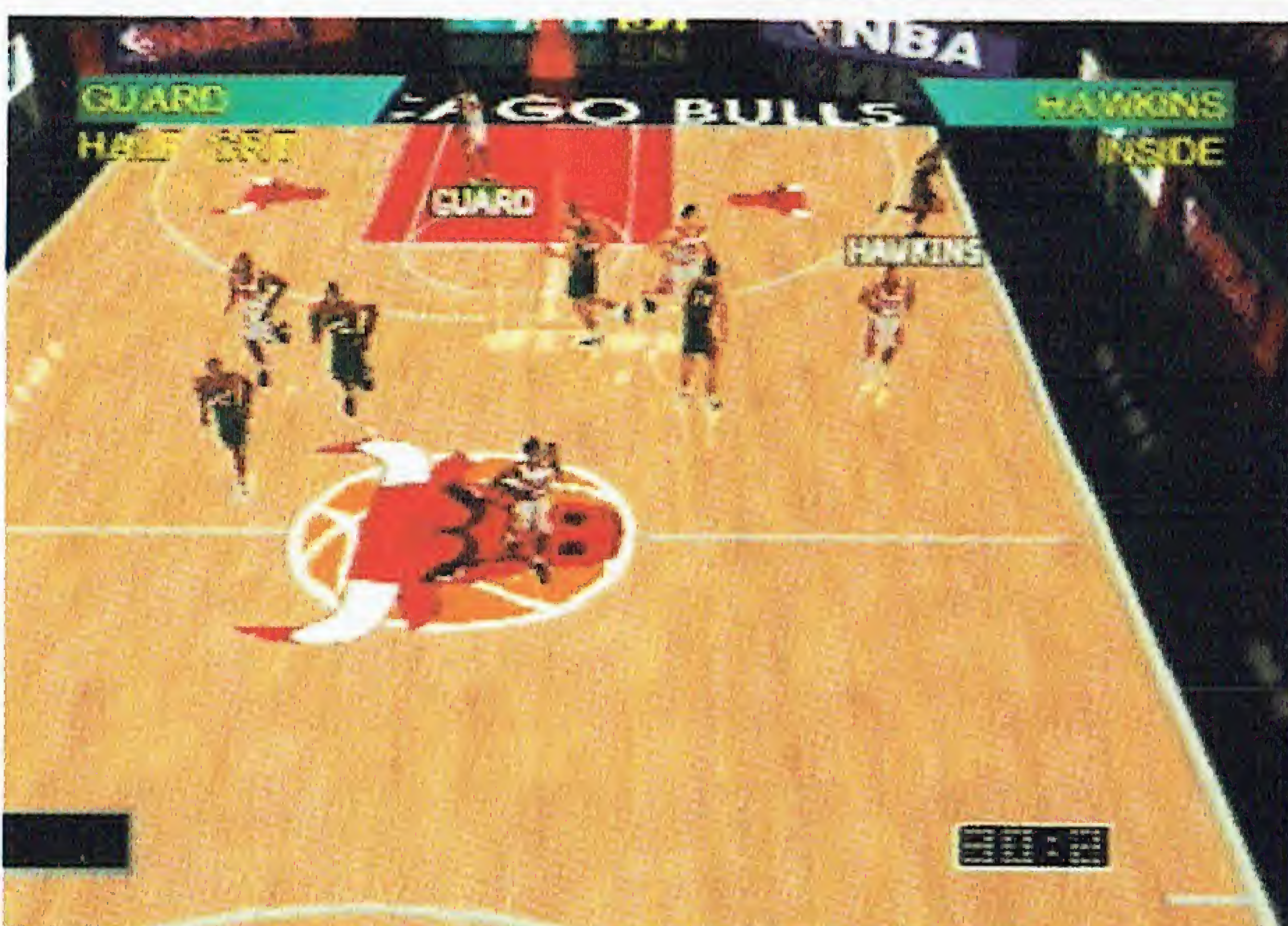
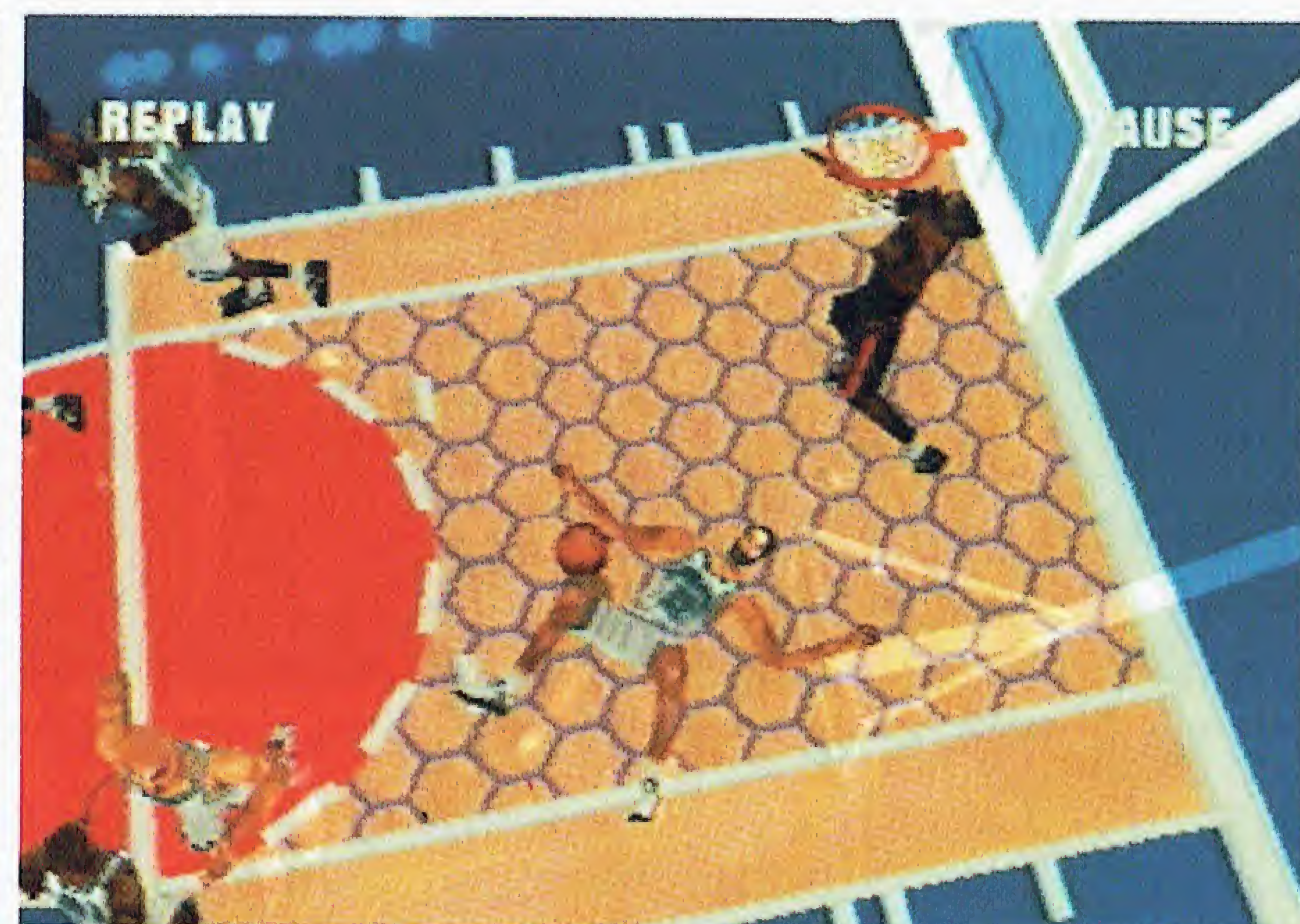
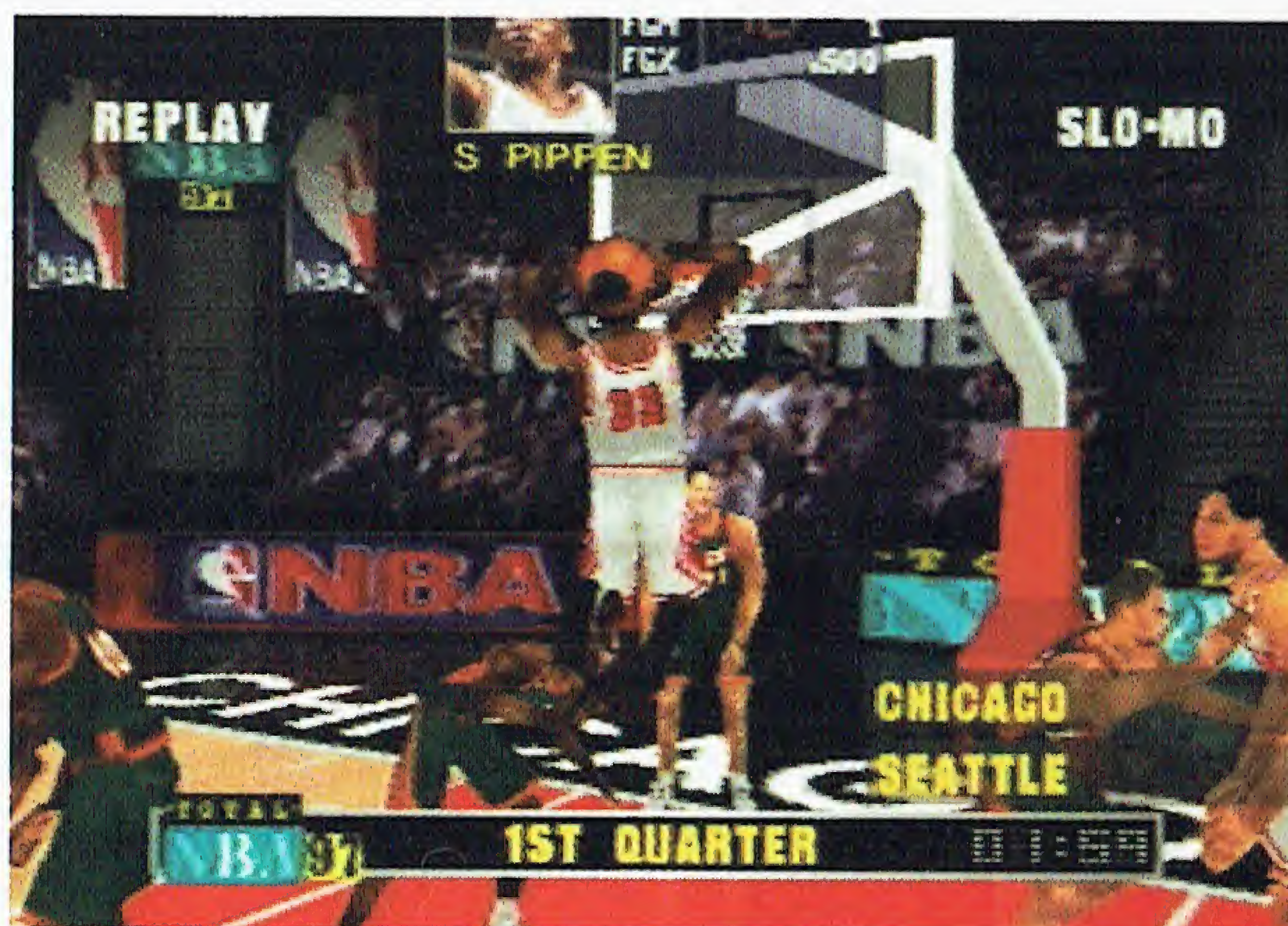
■ OVERALL: EA has done it again!
The ultimate basketball simulation - at least until next year's version.

9
OUT OF TEN

Total NBA '97

Adrian Bertram took time out from playing NBA Live '97 to play... another basketball game. While Total NBA '97 appears almost identical to EA's effort, there are a number of important differences.

PUBLISHER:	Sony
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
PLAYERS:	1 to 8
MEMORY CARD:	Save season
CONTROLLER:	Multitap
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Scotty slams it home (top left). Wake up, dude! This ain't nap time (top right). At home with the Bulls (lower left). Turn around you fool! (lower right)

appeal to those interested in the arcade end of the spectrum. But when you compare *Total's* simulation mode to that of *Live*, there is really no contest. EA has basically covered every possible rule and facet of the game in a way *Total* does not. Conversely however, *Live* doesn't fare as well for those who are looking for big dunks and few rules.

In terms of gameplay comparison, *Live* has more precise control over the players, but there is really little difference in the overall packages. In the end, dedicated basketball freaks will probably enjoy *NBA Live '97* more, with its wealth of statistics and options. *Total NBA '97* has a strong base to build on with the success of the earlier game, and will appeal more to action crazed dunking fanatics. This reviewer prefers *NBA Live '97* as a more complete simulation, but both games are definitely worthy of attention.

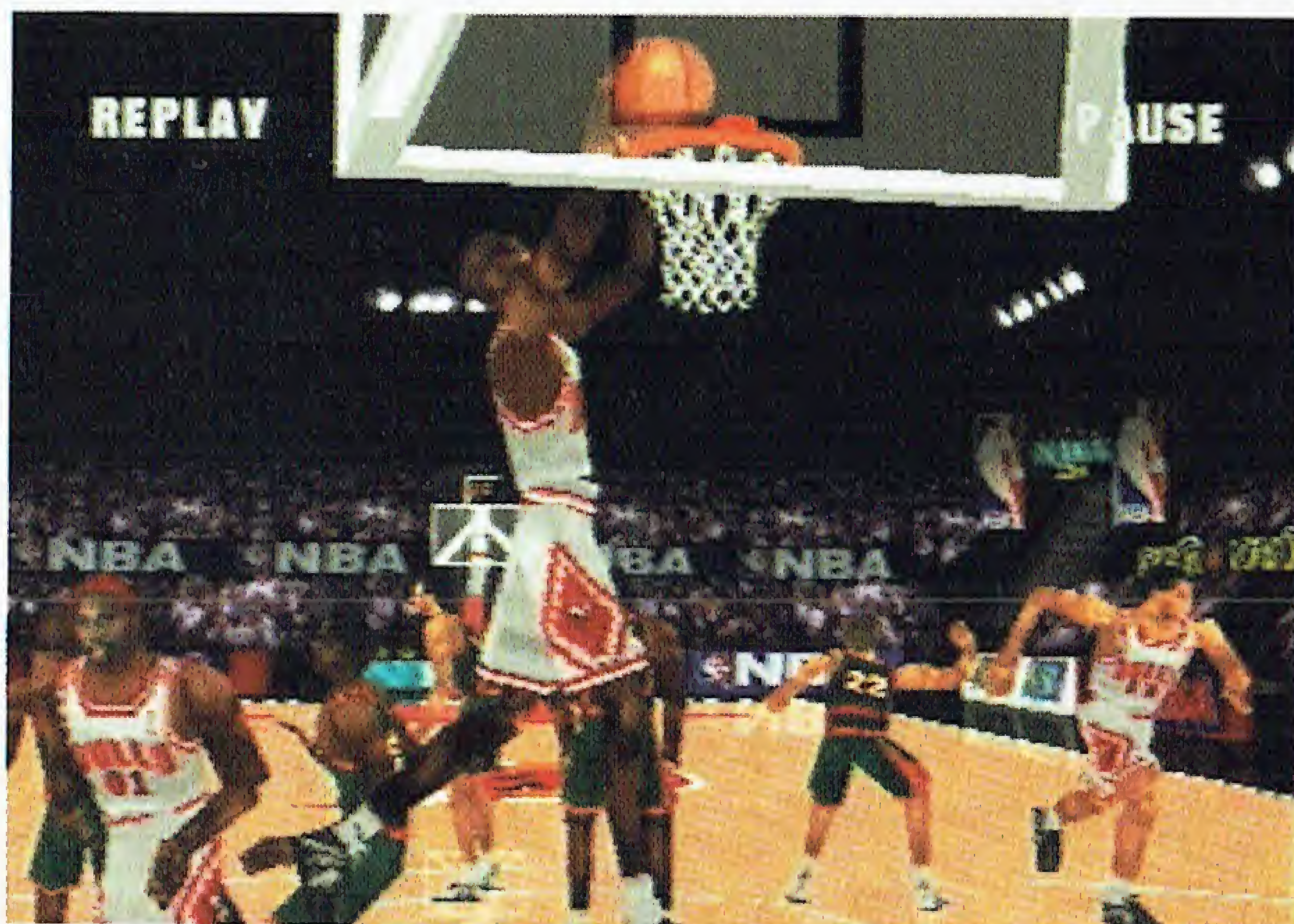
For a long time *Total NBA '96* was the reigning champion of basketball sims on the PlayStation. As a game developed solely for the PlayStation, it didn't suffer from conversion problems and was able to concentrate on the PlayStation's strengths, such as its graphic capacity. It was, however, one of the earlier PlayStation releases, so inevitably had some problems. In *Total NBA '97*, the producers have set out to rectify these problems and once again make their mark on the increasingly competitive basketball sim market. Have they been successful? Damn straight they have!

Without a doubt, the thing which first grabs you about *Total NBA '97* is the graphics. From the mandatory FMV intro onwards, this game makes fine use of the PlayStation's abilities. When you actually get to the court, the graphics are really quite tasty, but it's the motion captured players which really make this game what it is. The players have been very accurately rendered in this game, with players having moves typical of their real life counterparts. Unlike some other polygon-based sport games, their faces look very realistic.

In line with this sense of realism,

Total NBA '97 includes rosters which are correct to the 12/10/96 and, with the usual exceptions, all your favourites are included with a large amount of statistical information. If this doesn't appeal, you can create your own players.

The action can be viewed from a variety of traditional camera angles as well as from the particularly interesting action camera. In my opinion, this camera angle (a tight zoom which closely follows the play) makes the game. In some games, zooming in too much makes the characters look good, but they don't seem to act realistically. In *Total NBA '97*, however, this



Fashion conscious Dennis Rodman co-ordinates hair and team colours (left). What's that tall dude in the Lakers uniform doing with his hands? (right)

BASKETBALL HEAD TO HEAD PLAY TEST



The multitude of camera angles show the action for the best vantage point.

becomes the best way to play and lets you see more clearly what is going on.

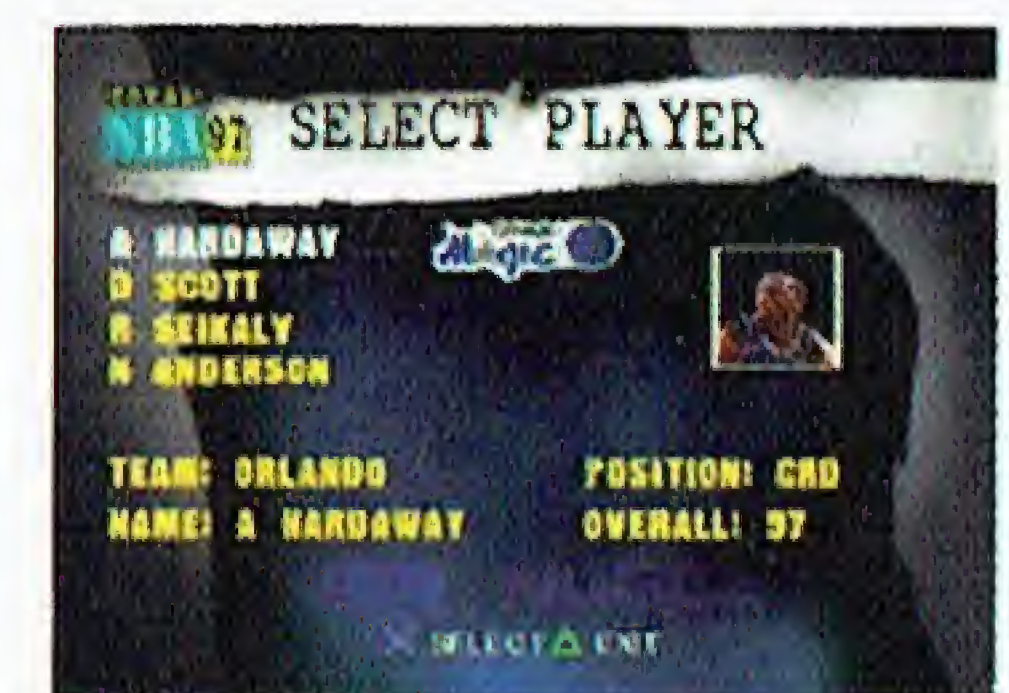
In this game the controls have been kept simple to facilitate faster action. An interesting feature in this respect is the icon pass option. By holding down one of the shoulder buttons the other four players in your team are marked with either a cross, triangle, square or circle above their head (or pointing in their general direction if they're off screen) which

corresponds to the buttons on the joypad. This is designed to make passing quicker and more accurate.

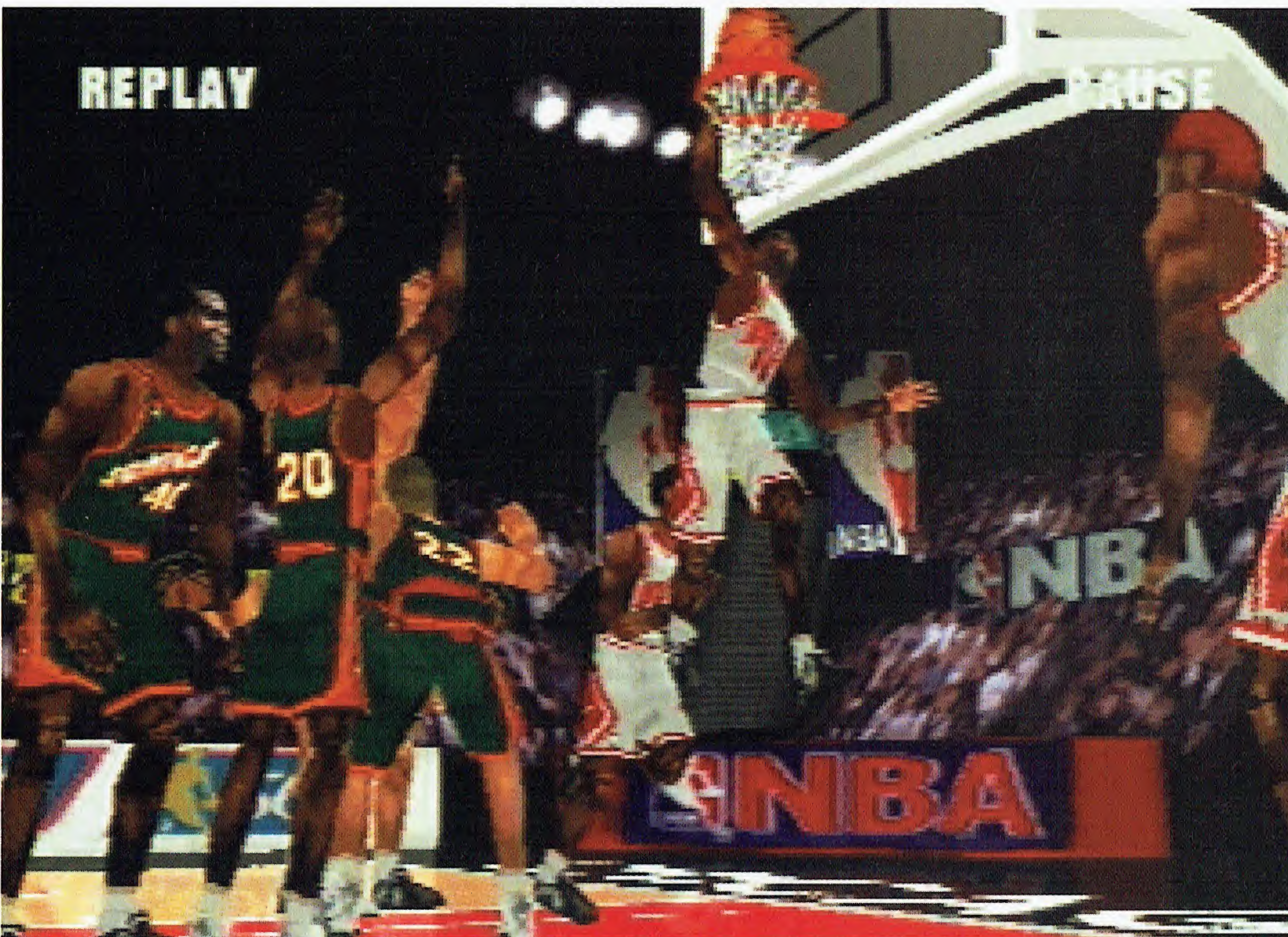
While this game is very, very good, it does have a couple of small problems. The first of these is that the motion of the players is sometimes a little too smooth, giving a slightly nonhuman feel to them. The second problem concerns the sound. While it's not bad in any serious way, it could be better. The commentary and crowd become slightly

repetitive after a while, and sound effects for the dunks could have been much beefier.

Overall, *Total NBA '97* is a very good game. With its successful blend of arcade-style dunking action and full court basketball simulation, it should snare both fans of the original and newcomers alike. Although its dedication to graphic excellence above all else may disappoint some fans of full-on sims, dunk heads need look no further.



Mmmm... Setup screens



Scoring points is easy when the defence just stands around watching.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	Very slick, especially on the close ups
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Funky beats, decent voices
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Fast and highly playable
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	More suited to quick games than full season tournaments
■ ORIGINALITY:	★	A re-hash of the previous version, just much slicker

■ OVERALL: If you want a great basketball game that has the emphasis on the thrills and spills, *Total NBA '97* should satisfy completely.

9
OUT OF TEN

It's time for the yearly update of sports games, so **Stretch Armstrong** puts on his shiny satin shorts and once again takes to the field in search of the ultimate soccer game.

PUBLISHER:	EA
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$99.95
PLAYERS:	1 - 8
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad/Multi
CLASSIFICATION:	G

FIFA '97



Spot the ball comp (left). "Come on ref, that was a deliberate trip! I'll cry if you don't card him!" (center) Corner (right)



Mmmm... Transfers (top). Team management (bottom).

Like every other sports game nut on the block, the various incarnations of *FIFA* have rocked my world for some years now. Along with the *Madden* series, it is the unquestionable leader of the sports franchises.

When *FIFA* moved to the PlayStation in 1996, it was cause for great excitement, but the game was really in a holding pattern. Yes, it was great to see the game in the 32 bit arena and yes, that beefed-up commentary was a delight, but really *FIFA '96* was just a more muscular version of its revered Megadrive counterpart. With *FIFA '97*, we were told, it was a whole new game and that, faithful readers, is the sort of news that sends blood rushing to all parts of the body. Why then am I so disappointed? Why am I so disappointed when all around me seem so chuffed? I can answer that question in one word - "speed". *FIFA* has always had plenty of it, but somewhere along the track *FIFA '97* got slowed down and I, for one, am none too happy about it.

Before I talk about the one bad point, though, let me talk about the good points in *FIFA '97*, and there are many of them.

First, and most exciting, is that *FIFA* is now playable in both indoor and outdoor modes - this is a great innovation. Outdoor soccer you know all about, but its faster, more manic cousin is now available within the game as well. Six a side, with "plexiglass" walls so that the ball is always in play, as well as all of the related options from the main game make *FIFA '97* effectively two soccer games in one.

The second good point is that the graphics have been vastly improved. Not that they weren't very good to begin with, but there's more depth, more sharpness and everything runs more smoothly. Simply, *FIFA* now looks like a game made for the new generation systems rather than a quickly amped-up conversion. These improved graphics are illustrated well by toggling through the eight camera angles which have been available to *FIFA* players since it moved to the PlayStation - all of which is very technically impressive, but let's face it, you'd have to be a tosser to ever use any more than two of them in a real game.

The commentary, which was such a leap forward in the '96 version, is even better now, with three (count 'em)

commentators adding colour to the proceedings. This, with the crowd chants and everything else, is really quite special. In addition, different players can now play at different skill levels (beginner, semi-pro or pro) meaning that even the most one-sided contest can be brought back to equilibrium.

Apart from all these new innovations, almost all the reasons you loved *FIFA* in the first place remain - you can enter friendly matches, tournaments, playoffs or play a whole season, choosing any one of 250 club teams from 12 leagues or from a host of international teams. All with the real player names and attributes. For the terminally hard to please, custom teams can also be built from scratch. Add this to the realistic gameplay, smooth controls and an artificial intelligence which makes it all seem so real and you've got one hell of a game.

All as I said, except for one point. No, make that two points. It really bugs me that the ability to manually control your goalie throughout the game has been removed. Yes, I love having a computer goalie when playing the CPU but they're now so damn good that the absence of this option means that a human-on-human, open-slaughter goal fest is now denied to us all. Not a major point, I'll grant you, but it bugs me, to be sure. That, and the issue of speed. As much, as I want to love this, and even given all the great new options, the pace of this game now seems sluggish compared to its predecessors. The old *FIFAs*, on every platform, screamed and there's no reason this shouldn't do the same. It doesn't and even if it seems like nit-picking, it is a significant flaw.

This could have been the greatest instalment of the best sports game ever, but for this problem. Everything else is in place, but if EA had to omit one quality from the game, they picked the wrong one.



Everybody wearing a blue shirt run to the right!

FIFA '97

GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	OVERALL: <div>8</div> OUT OF TEN
SOUND:	★★★★	
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	
LIFESPAN:	★★★★	
ORIGINALITY:	★★★	

Complete Onside Soccer



Look, there's a McDonalds ad in the corner. I'm hungry now (left). "Okay, everyone help me look for my keys. I know I dropped them somewhere..." (right)

Having complained loud and long that the latest version of my beloved *FIFA* is not fast enough, along comes *Onside* to attempt to fill the gap. And yes, I will never be able to complain that this game is not fast enough. On the pitch, *Onside* positively burns with end to end excitement, and defence can turn to attack in the twinkling of an eye (how's that for a diabolical sporting cliché?).

But while I and others may have moaned about the shortcomings of *FIFA '97*, that had more to do with the fact that we expected perfection and didn't get it, rather than *FIFA* being a dodgy game. So, we mark one up for *Onside* in the speed stakes, but has it got the other qualities required to be a major contender? Well, yes and no.

This is a very good game, one of the best in the league, but it's not quite premier quality yet, and I am about to tell you why.

From a distance, *Onside* looks pretty cool, but up close it doesn't have anywhere near the graphical quality *FIFA* (still the standard measure for soccer

games) can boast, especially so in the '97 version. While the little 'firefly' denoting the player in possession is very cool and the game reeks speed (there's that word again), the gameplay is no where near as tough or as realistic as some other soccer games. Yes, you can pass with precision, lob the ball and everything else, but somehow the challenge doesn't seem as brutal. Dispossessing your opponent is too easy and the goalies are not the expletive-inducing brutes from other sims. Sure, I like a high-scoring encounter as much as the next guy, but this game feels more arcadey than it should, given that it purports to be a high quality sim. It's got all the options you could ever require, right down to strip design and player transfers. All this is great stuff, but as any sports hack will tell you, it's what happens on the paddock that matters and, in this regard, *Onside* is just a little

bit shy of promotion calibre.

Of course, while it purports to be a game sim, that's not all *Onside* claims to be and it's not all that it is. It also boasts that peculiarly British option, the Soccer Manager, and it's a bloody good one. This is where, in a manner reminiscent of *Sim City*, you become a club manager and run the team both on and off the field. Every decision will be yours, from training programs to selling players to obtaining loans to upgrade the stadium, and the fans will judge you for it. Popularity will set the turnstiles spinning, fill the coffers and allow you to purchase Renaldo. Bad decisions will see you packed off to manage the Bognor Regis reserve grade side. Yes, the manager option is very serious train-spotter territory, but it's excellently done and adds a complete extra dimension to this game.

PUBLISHER:	Elite
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$99.95
PLAYERS:	1 to 2
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



A different way of selecting the camera angle (top). "Right, anyone moves, whack 'em. We's 'ere to prevent unrooly be-ha-vi-oor" (bottom)

Head to Head

FIFA and *Onside* are two very different soccer games. On one hand *FIFA* tries to be a realistic simulation of the sport, while on the other, *Onside* is a lot more like an arcade-style game. Which do you prefer?

COMPLETE ONSIDE SOCCER

GRAPHICS:	★★★★	OVERALL:
SOUND:	★★★★	
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	
LIFESPAN:	★★★★	
ORIGINALITY:	★★★	

6
OUT OF TEN



Look, it says 'Red Card'. God I hate writing captions for sport games.

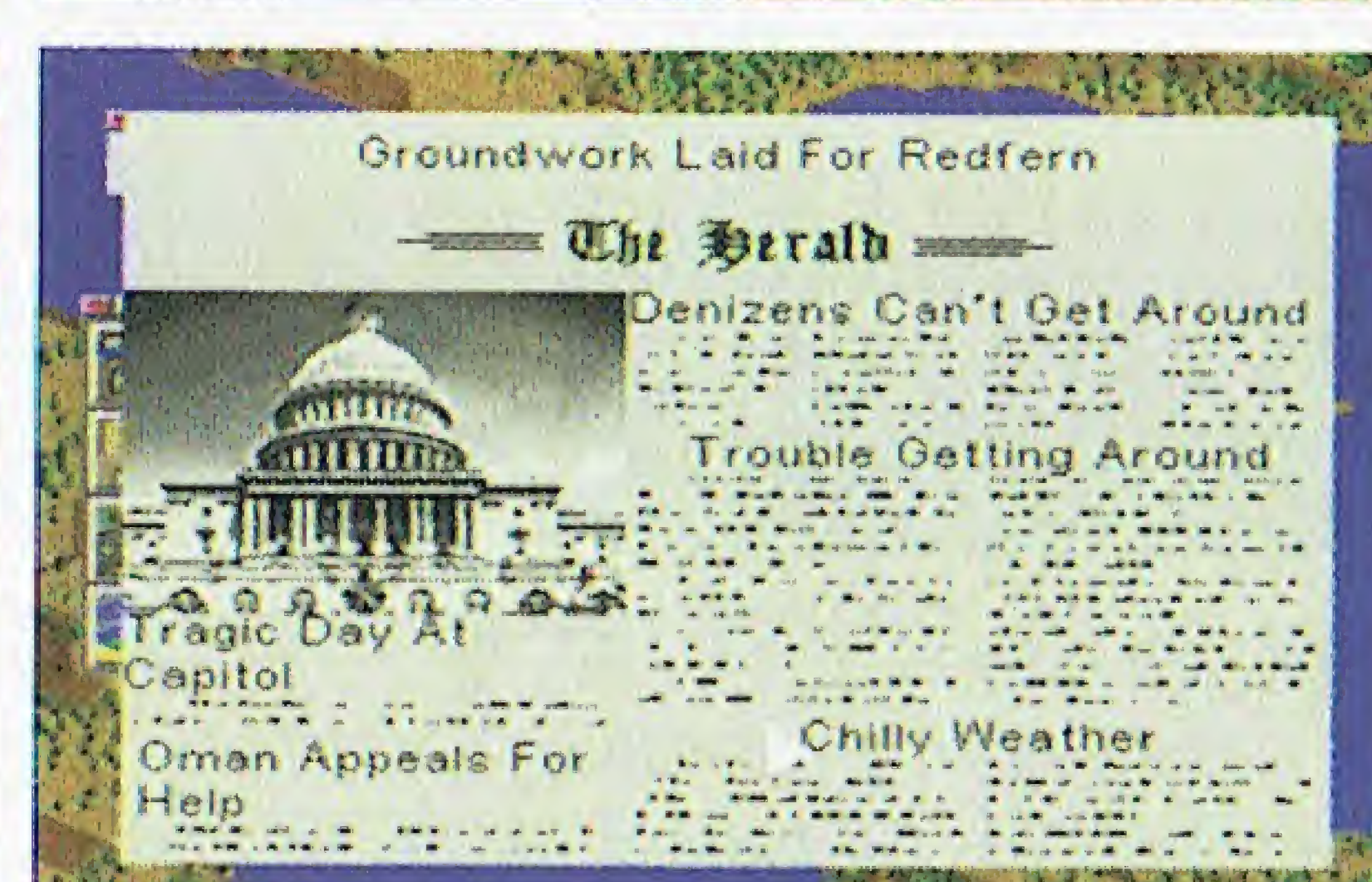
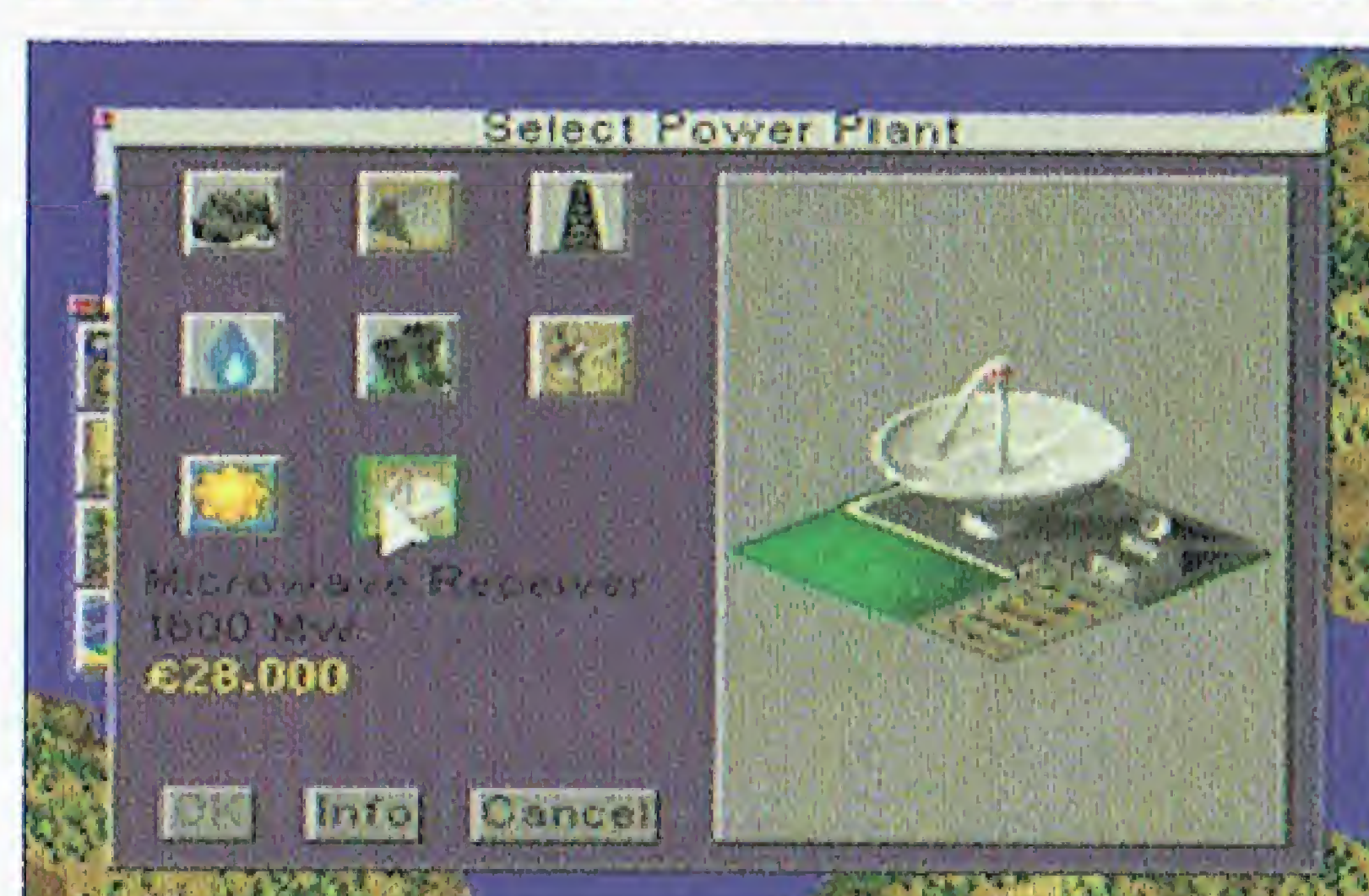
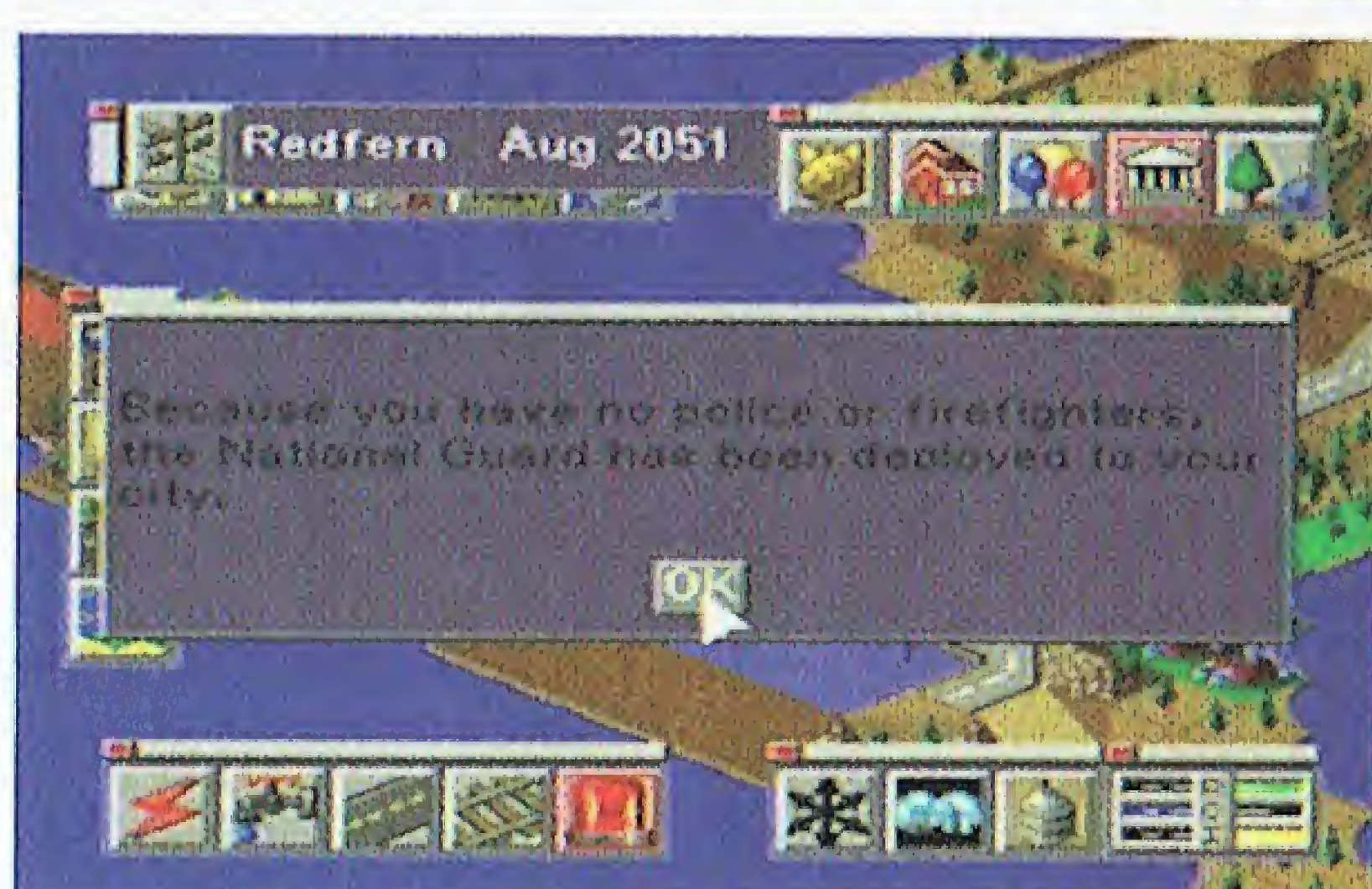
Clyde E. Scope fancies himself as mayor, so he pulls out the jack hammer and goes on the baby kissing campaign trail. Before you elect him, let's see how he fares with the virtual voters.

PUBLISHER:	EA
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$99.95
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad/mouse
CLASSIFICATION:	G

Sim City 2000



Look at this lovely rendered intro. Bet your town doesn't look as nice as this.



Heh heh, heh heh! Fire! Fire! Fire! Heh heh, heh heh! Watch it burn, burn burn! Why won't my mum let me play with matches? And where's Burt?

For those of you who have seen *Sim City 2000* on a PC, you will be very pleased to know that it has been faithfully reproduced on the PlayStation for your simulation pleasure. For those of you who haven't, you're in for a treat! *Sim City 2000* sets the standard for urban simulation games. Just about every aspect of this classic game has been included in this release, as well as some nice interface features to make it a breeze to operate on the PlayStation.

You can start with a pre-generated landscape or create your own with the map editor, then you are ready to become the mayor of your new city. It is your responsibility to zone various

regions as industrial, commercial or residential, construct roads, supply power and plumbing and you're away. Your city will grow before your eyes!

As Sims (your sim citizens) move into your city, they will demand more facilities such as police departments, fire stations, schools, hospitals, airports, parks and more. It's up to your urban planning skills to keep them happy. Furthermore, you will need to set reasonable tax levels, control pollution, monitor crime and maintain the budget each year, but don't fret, much of these tasks can be done automatically and if you're uncertain of what course to take there is a panel of advisers who offer suggestions.

The graphics are remarkably detailed and you can zoom in and out and rotate the landscape to assist with your constructions and when editing the contours of the land. When building roads (or train tracks, power lines and water pipes), you click on the desired starting point and drag your pointer to where you want it to end up and the optimum route will be indicated. You must take into account the terrain that you're building on as constructions are limited by angular cliffs and valleys, but it's possible to cover just about every square on the map with something.

There are many aspects to *Sim City 2000* to help you plan the perfect city including graphs for feedback on your decisions and for the destructive; disasters!

On the PC *Sim City 2000* was brilliant, but some concessions have been made in the translation. Most notably is the lower resolution, though this isn't really a problem. What will annoy you, however, is the snail-like pace at which the game runs. While the rate of development can be increased in the game speed menu, the actual physical process of moving the cursor around the screen is painfully slow.

Even if you are traditionally not into simulation games, the sounds, graphics and overall depth combine to make *Sim City 2000* a very enjoyable experience, if somewhat on the sedate side. The satisfaction of watching your city grow from shanty town to megalopolis can't be beaten.



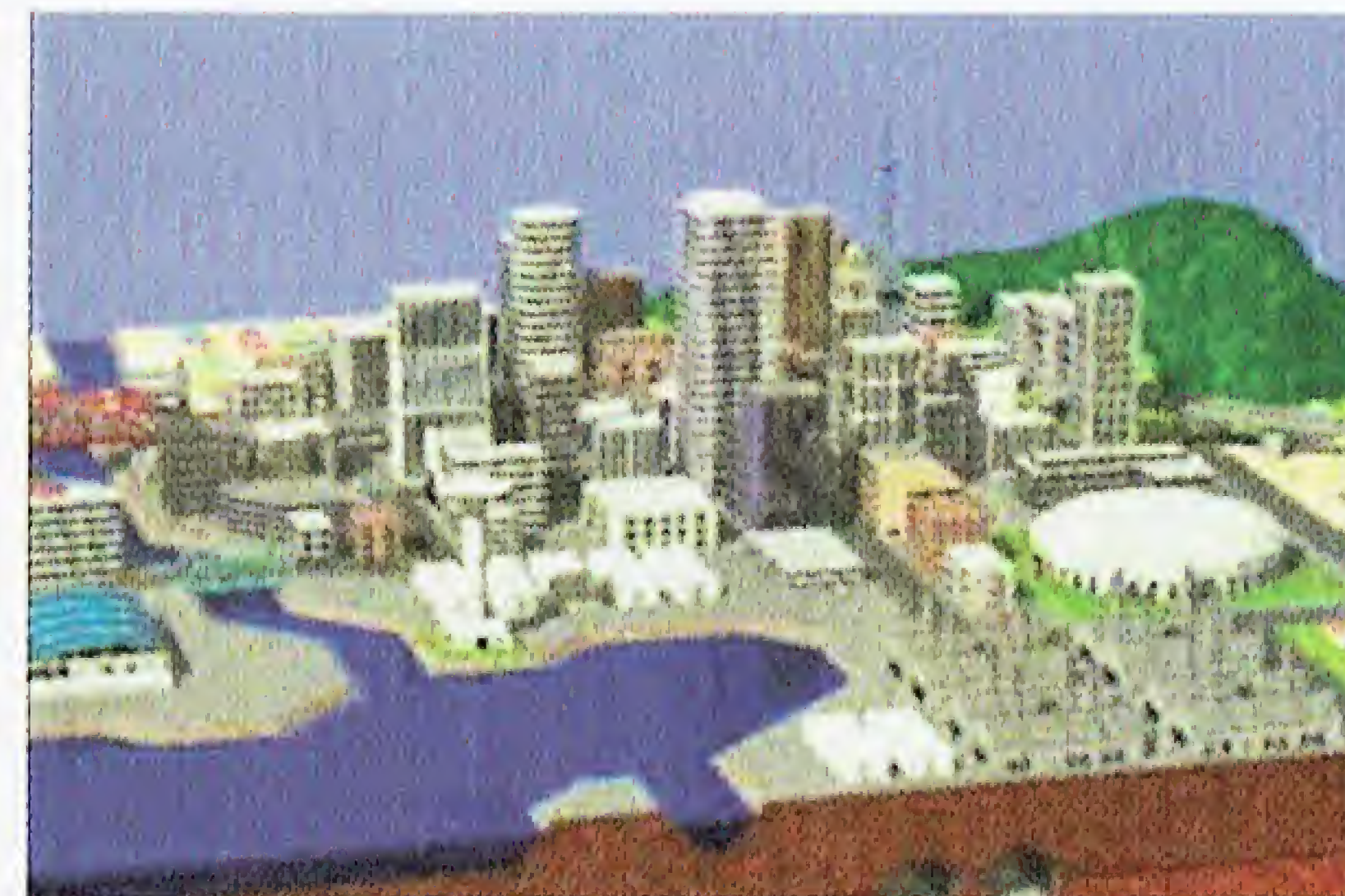
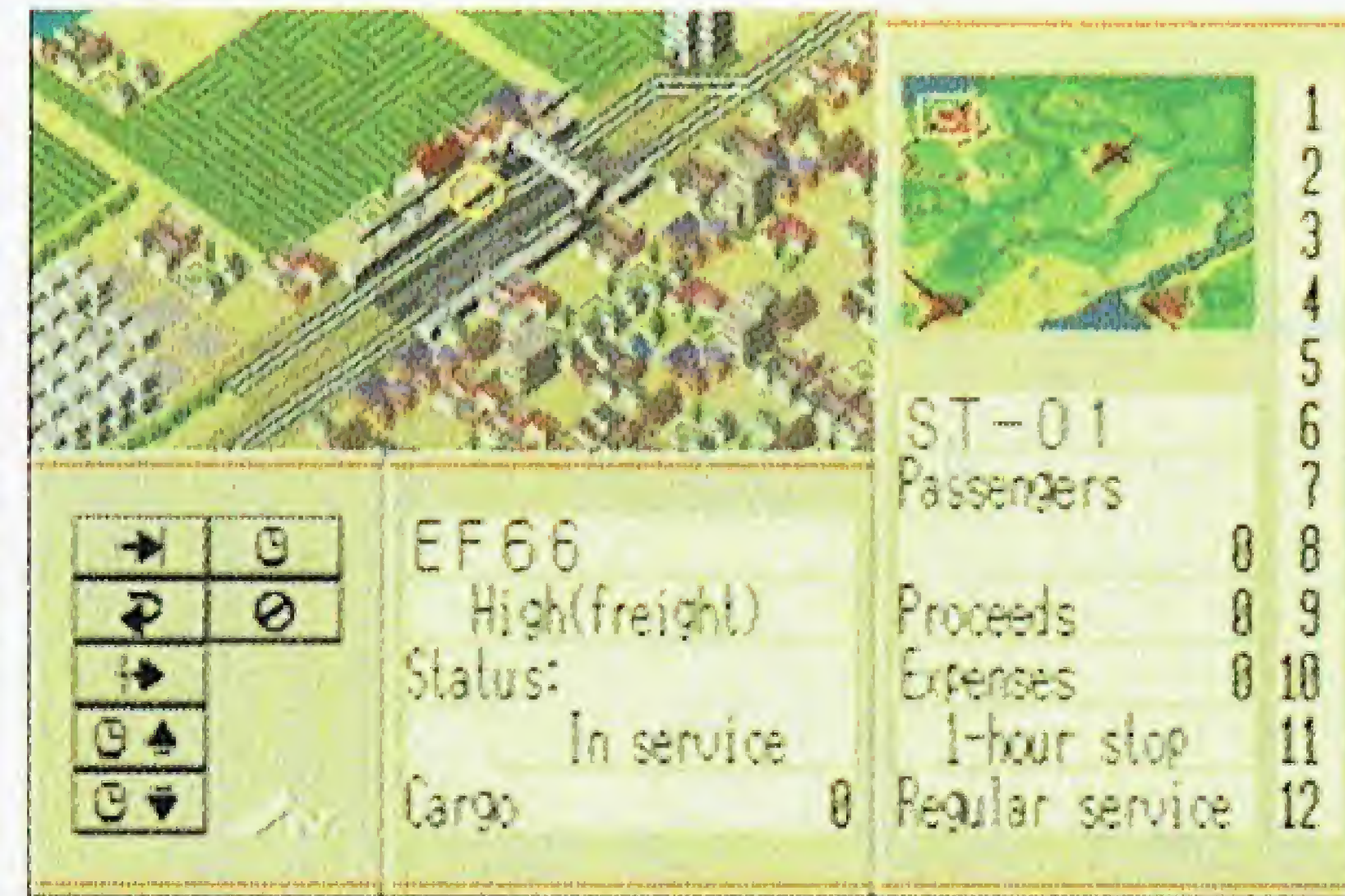
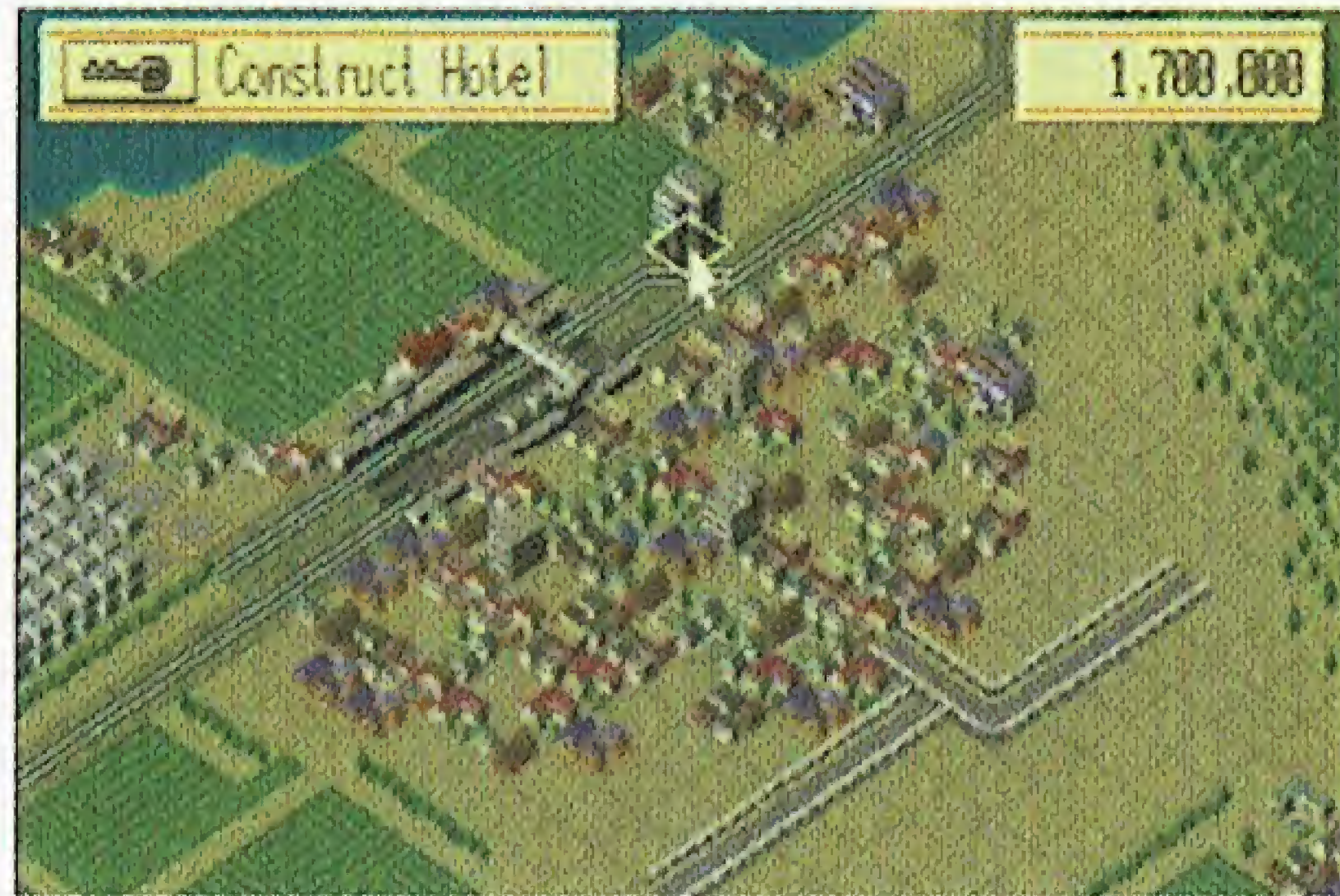
Just another day at the office.

SIM CITY 2000

GRAPHICS:	★★★★	OVERALL:
SOUND:	★★	
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	
LIFESPAN:	★★★★★	
ORIGINALITY:	★★★	

8
OUT OF TEN

A.I.V Evolution Global



Let's build a hotel and roads and destroy the peaceful country life (left). Boring! (centre) Another intro that looks nothing like the rest of the game (right).

This must be one of the most in-depth games available on the PlayStation to date. *A.I.V Evolution Global* is an urban development simulation with particular emphasis on transportation; that is trains and buses. You start by getting a partially built city and it is your job to start laying train

tracks and roads for your transport system. After you have them in place the simulation changes to building your city, adding hotels, offices, factories and, of course, various leisure complexes to keep your citizens happy. Once the construction of your city has been completed, the focus shifts towards the financial management where your duties involve buying and selling stocks, shares and real estate to expand your wealth.

A.I.V can be an incredibly anal strategy game at times. Not only do you have to lay the train tracks and build the roads, you also have to buy the actual trains and buses, of which there are a few models to choose from. To fulfil your duties you must even configure timetables based on demand for each service!

The game takes an oblique overhead perspective of your city and you can move it around with the joypad or mouse. An annoying aspect of this view, however, is that there isn't a properly defined boundary to your city. It just disappears off the screen and the only reason that you

know that you've reached the boundary is when you can't scroll any further. Whilst we're on annoying aspects, not being able to move the screen while you are trying to place an object and the computer's lack of logical intelligence when building tracks and roads can be a really frustrating.

There is only one view of your city, as unfortunately no zoom feature has been included. An interesting aspect shared with *Sim City 2000* is that you actually get to see your city through the eyes of a passenger inside any one of your buses or trains as it travels along its route, and you can watch the results of your construction efforts in real time 3D.

It may well take the average player weeks to master and understand all aspects of this game, as the complexity is overwhelming. But if you're busting for a multi-faceted civic construction simulation that provides hours of painstaking involvement, or if you really enjoyed your train set as a youngster, put *A.I.V Evolution Global* in your PlayStation.

Head to Head

If you are interested in a simulation game for your PlayStation, then consider how complex you would like it to be. *A.I.V Evolution Global* presents an extremely elaborate simulation and has a big emphasis on transport. *Sim City 2000*, on the other hand, presents itself as more of a fun game, though with no less the depth of options and variables. You can immediately see your city growing without getting involved with the intricacies of the game.

Another important aspect to consider is the user interface. *A.I.V*'s construction mechanisms are no match for *Sim City*'s intelligent 'rubber band' controls. After all, Maxis has had a long history of producing simulation games and this heritage makes it difficult to beat them when it comes to playability and overall presentation. Despite their apparent similarities, there are a lot of big differences between the two games. *Sim City 2000* is recommended as your first taste of an urban simulation game, but if you are feeling a little more adventurous, try *A.I.V Evolution Global*.

A.I.V Evolution Global

■ GRAPHICS:	★★	■ OVERALL:	5 OUT OF TEN
■ SOUND:	★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★		



An interesting feature of *A.I.V* is that day turns to night and rain falls. Actually it's pretty boring.

PUBLISHER:	Sony
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$89.95
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Mouse
CLASSIFICATION:	G

Sony's Head Honcho

A native of Boston Massachusetts, Chris Deering graduated from Boston College and Harvard Business School. His multimedia experience began as Vice President International Marketing at Atari in 1983. Since 1985 Mr Deering served as Senior Vice President - International Marketing at Atari and from 1990 as Executive Vice President, International for Sony's Columbia Pictures Home Video New York and in Los Angeles, from which he joined the newly formed London based Sony Computer Entertainment Europe as President in 1995. We caught up with him during his recent visit to our shores and spoke about the current state of affairs in the world of the PlayStation.



Tekken 3 - coming to the PlayStation... eventually.

PSM: The PlayStation has enjoyed immense success over here in Australia, how has it fared in Europe itself?

CD: The PlayStation was launched Europe in September 1995, about a month earlier than in Australia. In Europe in total - in which we include Australia because the European operation of Sony PlayStation is for all PAL territories - we just passed the 2 million mark of usership, and the success has been pretty even all around. Certainly Australia is one of the better performing territories and we're very excited about that. In Australia and Europe there is quite a nice software to hardware ratio. Roughly six games have been shipped into the market for every PlayStation console and just over five have gone through to consumers. I think that's a record for new games systems - certainly much higher than any cartridge system in the past - and if we look up to Japan, where the PlayStation has been on the market a year longer, the ratio of software to hardware is approaching 8 to 1. This means that a lot more games are available for people to play and a lot more product for retailers to sell, which makes a much healthier environment for developers to invest in the writing of games, resulting in a much more solid platform.

PSM: How do you see the launch of the Nintendo 64 affecting the PlayStation - both here and in Europe?

CD: The N64 launched in Japan in June of last year. Since that time, PlayStation sales have taken off in a major way. I think the arrival of a new Nintendo product tends to heighten awareness of the category in general. Certainly in Japan, the PlayStation has been outselling Nintendo virtually the whole time the N64 has been on the market, except maybe for the first few weeks when there was a bubble of loyal support. Nintendo came on the US market in September '96, created a great deal of excitement and news value and sold just over a million units. The PlayStation in the same period (since the launch of N64 in the States) sold over 1.3 million. So while competition always has its uncertainties, if you look to what has happened elsewhere, we would expect that the impact on PlayStation would be to improve our sales and improve the overall health of the video game business.

PSM: Our readers constantly ask if and when there is going to be a PlayStation II, is there anything you can tell us about plans for the next Sony console?

CD: There is a big R&D team in Japan, the people who invented the PlayStation. There is a lot of cost reduction engineering going on - work on new controllers and other features to enhance the current system. I'm not aware of any specific definition of a new console or the specs of any upgraded product or successor product, but if and when something like that does come along, it probably won't be until the turn of the century. There's plenty of room left in the PlayStation for a lot more growth.

PSM: Sometimes there are delays in PAL releases of PlayStation games that have been developed in NTSC countries, specifically Japan and the U.S. Is this something that will improve in the future?

CD: The games are usually written in NTSC, even in Europe when Psygnosis or Sony develop games. There are things that can be done in the process of writing the game which will enhance the speed of which the conversions to PAL can be done. Fighting games in particular can be converted very quickly. There is a delay, but on average that lag is not more than 6 to 8 weeks. It probably will come down as developers are constantly experimenting.

PSM: It's obvious that one of the PlayStation's greatest assets is its strong lineup of software developers supporting the system. Will we be seeing many games developed by Sony's internal teams?

CD: We have ten programming teams in Japan, and in the States there's about eight. In London, we have four. When you overlay that with Psygnosis, the output is somewhere around twenty games a year. *Total NBA '96* was done in London and there's an upgrade of that coming shortly. On top of that, there's *Porsche Challenge* and *Rapid Racer*, which features white water and jet boats and is looking very good. The US guys have come up with *Twisted Metal World Tour*, *Jet Rider* and *NFL Game Day '97*, in addition to a number of other projects. We want the platform to be open, we want to have a favourable profit environment for the publishers of games so they can expect a return on their investment. We don't want to be competing with them, but we do produce a certain number of games to stay current with the machine. We've had some successes and some not-so successes, but there's plenty of software in the pipeline from Sony itself.

PSM: Psygnosis has been one of the best developers for the PlayStation. What's the current situation in terms of it developing solely for the PlayStation?

CD: Psygnosis is a company which is wholly owned by Sony. However, it operates as an independent company and from time to time they have done some Sega skews, as well as continuing to produce PC games. I think their focus now is primarily on the PlayStation, with a few games ported over to the PC. The nature of the market would suggest that even if they were fully independent they would probably be focussing on these two sectors, because that's what most other independent publishers are doing.

PSM: Does it bother you when they convert games such as *Wipeout* for the Saturn? Is that seen as a loss of any sort?

CD: The PlayStation team is very happy that say, *Crash Bandicoot*, isn't on the other systems. We have a close relationship with Namco and their products aren't on other systems. At other times the products that come out cannot be made to fit in other systems without substantial modifications; something like *Formula 1* - there's no way you could do that on N64, but it's kind of disappointing when we see that happen. On the other hand, they are independent so they have to follow the market and they did do a few Saturn versions, but they've not sold nearly as

well as the PlayStation versions and the drop in quality is obvious. I think that's had a major impact on the success of the Saturn versus the PlayStation.

PSM: Are there any recent acquisitions of developers by Sony we could expect good things from?

CD: There was an announcement recently in Japan by Enix, the company that makes the *Dragon Quest* RPG series which has sold over 12 million on the super Famicom (SNES). It announced that it would be supporting the PlayStation in order to take advantage of the disc headroom. That piece of news, combined with the news about Squaresoft's *Final Fantasy VII*, is something of which the PlayStation team in Japan are very proud. I think it will direct the course of the video-gaming future for quite some time. As far as great games from any source coming out next year, certainly there will be a sequel to *Tomb Raider*, which is a great game out now. There's some great games coming from Namco which we will have on our system - *Time Crisis*, I think will be huge; *Rage Racer* has sold a huge number in Japan already, then there's *Tekken 3* on the horizon. Fox is working on a game of the *X-Files* which is looking pretty good. *Jurassic Park* from Dreamworks SKG will be an exclusive on PlayStation, at least for quite some time. There's a Disney title in development to match up to their new movie *Hercules* which is due out about Christmas time. In-house, we have a great new game called *Grandtourismo* which is being worked on by the team who did *Motor GP2*. Psygnosis has a great title called *G-Police* in the works; *Life Force Tenka*, which is a *Doom*-type game; *Riot* which is a *Speedball*-type game and, of course *Formula 1 Part 2*.

PSM: Any news on a modem or internet facility for the PlayStation?

CD: A part of the network owns Yarouze, the Black PlayStation, which has a feature whereby you can use an internet connection in conjunction with a PC. It's a hobbyist developer's tool and game code can be transmitted from a PC modem to another fan or to us for evaluation. There are no plans at this stage to do the kind of thing that Sega has on their Saturn, but up to now they (Sega) have not sold more than the number of the initial wave of hobbyists who've bought it. It's under consideration, and it is obviously possible in the future.

PSM: What about plans of a global PlayStation intranet?

CD: That is something that we've thought of. There are other electronically assisted game delivery methods, but quite honestly, the PlayStation right now is going through stage two of its expansion and the games that are coming along are really great improvements over the earlier ones. There's a lot to do, and we want to keep it simple and stay focussed. The Yarouze, the Black PlayStation, is a very specialised product which enables people to learn how to program in C++, and enhance the pool of talent that can write PlayStation games. That's good, just like the Amiga or the old days of Spectrum or Commodore 64. During the whole era of the 16 bit consoles, no one could independently develop software for them. Now we're making it possible for people who want to learn about writing games. In Japan, where the system has been out for some months, there's been some pretty exciting little 'gamelets' that people have done. That can certainly be done through internet connections. We're staying focussed now on the main event, which is to broaden the user base and to keep the exciting momentum behind the investment in product development.

PSM: Have there been any concrete results from Japan of hobbyist produced games? Is there a new developer sitting out there somewhere?

CD: Perhaps, but there's no master plan of either electronic connection or way to circumvent the normal way in which games are written and talent is employed by publishers, but if we come across something really exciting, or if a publisher comes something really exciting who knows what may come of it. We look around and see what people are doing. If it's a great idea, I'm sure it will find its way into the market somehow.

PSM: Have you had much response outside of Japan?

CD: For Yarouze we've had to delay the launch in PAL countries. We were going to go just before Christmas, but production numbers were so tight on hardware that it didn't make sense to alter the factories' production scheduling to get that in. Now it's coming out shortly in both the US and PAL countries.

PSM: The PlayStation's got steering wheels, light guns, a mouse and analog controllers. Is there anything else interesting we might be seeing soon?

CD: There is a new analogue controller being readied for launch in Japan which has twin thumb joypads. I believe it has some sort of feedback - when you punch, they hit. There's a lot of little side projects on guns and other kinds of peripherals, but what's out there now is proving very successful and if we can improve the palette, we will. We're researching control developments of all kinds at the moment.

PSM: What are your thoughts on the Australian scene?

CD: For the population, the penetration of PlayStation in Australia is up there in the top four or five, with the others being New Zealand, Finland and Ireland. It's interesting that the PlayStation has been quite successful where the PC acceptance is high. One out of two PlayStation owners has a PC in the home.

It's great to see more magazine support, it helps keep interest in the category and helps keep us honest in what we put out. All in all, it's a really exciting environment. There's not too many product categories which have these elements of newness to them all the time. Australia's probably more advanced than the US in this regard, and certainly up there with the UK and France and those similar type environments. As we enter a new phase, with competition coming into the market, the likely effect of that would be to speed up the sales of PlayStation, as happened in Japan and the States. We just have to make sure we have the products for people and keep the excitement up.

Behind the Wheel

Sony's new driving game is the first on the PlayStation to be licensed to one particular car. As such, it was important that the game accurately represented the look and feel of the car involved. We spoke to Pascal Jarry, the Internal Development Manager of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe to find out how they did it.

PSM: How did Porsche become involved?

PJ: The Porsche Boxster is a new car for Porsche. It's their only new car in 18 years. The car is new, and the target is younger. They knew they had to change their mode of communication and their image slightly, so they spoke to Sony Computer Entertainment Europe about doing "something". At SCEE, what we said was clear: "We know how to make games, but we're not here to make commercials. If you want a commercial, we can't help you. If you want a game, we speak the same language".

They liked the idea of having a game about their sport car (because the Boxster is not a simple GTI), so we started working on a game design almost immediately.

PSM: What sort of technical support did Porsche provide?

PJ: Porsche has been excessively co-operative with us. We had a huge level of security and access to everything. Once, an engineer made the trip from Stuttgart to London and back again to give us a DAT tape. This tape contained all the 3D maps of the Boxster. Whilst he was waiting, we had to check what we needed for our purposes and discard the rest from our computers.

The information we had in our hands was worth several million dollars. We had all the confidential information about the car - the engine, all the curves. They also gave us valuable advice about actually driving a sports car - the feeling, the handling (like a hand brake turn), when to brake etc. It was a great collaboration, we learned a lot, and this is why the game reaches this level, I guess. Nothing's better than combining skills.

PSM: Did they understand the processes involved in developing a game?

PJ: Not at the beginning, but they soon learned. They wanted to oversee everything from day one and so on. We had to explain the process, discuss milestones (for them to check the quality etc). This discussion about the release date was very short:

Porsche: "Is it possible to make the game for Xmas '96?"

SCEE: "Yes, if you want to make a game like (censored), you can have it for this date, but we won't do it. For SCEE, quality is first".

Porsche: "Quality is first for Porsche as well. Give us your date and let's focus on the quality".

PSM: Are there any other Porsche cars apart from the Boxster?

PJ: No. Porsche didn't want to have any of their other cars in the game so as to avoid comparison. The Boxster is a brilliant sports car in its own right, extremely safe and fast. If you compare its price with that of a 911, you might not want to buy a 911 anymore. The additional Porsche we have in the game is the Test Driver's Boxster. You have access to it when you finish the game and you can even tweak it if you finish the game in the 'medium' or 'evil' difficulty levels. The game also has plenty of cheats, but the player isn't rewarded with some of them until they finish levels in 'evil' difficulty.

PSM: The game includes the famous Stuttgart track, how did you translate this to the game? Are any of the other tracks based upon real roads?

PJ: Stuttgart is the only real track. As for the car, we entered the real map of it in our computers. This track is simple in Classic (you can play on each track in Classic, Long or Interactive) and extremely challenging in Interactive, just as we like. Porsche uses the track to try their cars and check



the handling, maximum speed and so on.

PSM: Tell us about the drivers. What are the differences between them if they all drive the same car?

PJ: The differences between the drivers are complex and deep, but you won't notice them immediately. The most straight forward is that they don't have the same Boxster, and they don't drive them the same way. This means that they have different behavioural characteristics. One has more grip, one accelerates faster and so on.

The other difference is the artificial intelligence we implemented. In real life, when a beautiful woman touches a man's sports car, it's not so important if he's a nice guy. If someone uses their horn, depending on the circumstances and who you are and who is beeping at you, the driver's reaction will change. So in the game, depending on what you do, who you are and who you deal with, the reactions will be different. If you bump into Rachel's car, you'll make her aggressive, especially if you're Nikita. If Taka-bo is beeped at, it's likely that he will move out of the way and drive to the side. If you use your horn on him too much, he will be anxious and may lose control when you overtake him.

PSM: Apparently the music is influenced by events on the track. How so?

PJ: The overall sound, music included, is very important. What happens when you're in a harbour? Usually, you hear seagulls. So, we have this sound in the game. What sounds do you hear when you drive in a tunnel? Or slowly in the water? Or when you skid on grass? We have plenty of sounds to cover all of these situations.

As far as the music is concerned, it's clear that there is a gap between the film industry and games today. We can't imagine a film today with the same music used all through it. In *Porsche Challenge* the music changes depending on what you do. In short, if you race in first position the music will reflect your excitement. If you're still third in the last lap, it will have an anxious beat to spur you on. The sound also gives some information to the player. In the Alps Interactive track, the church bell doesn't sound if the short cut is opened. How do you open it? You'll have to find out for yourself!

PSM: What features of the game are you most pleased about?

PJ: Playability. It was a challenge to make the game realistic and playable. We put lots of effort into making this game good to play. We're proud of the result and we regularly play it ourselves.

PSM: What features distinguish it from other driving games?

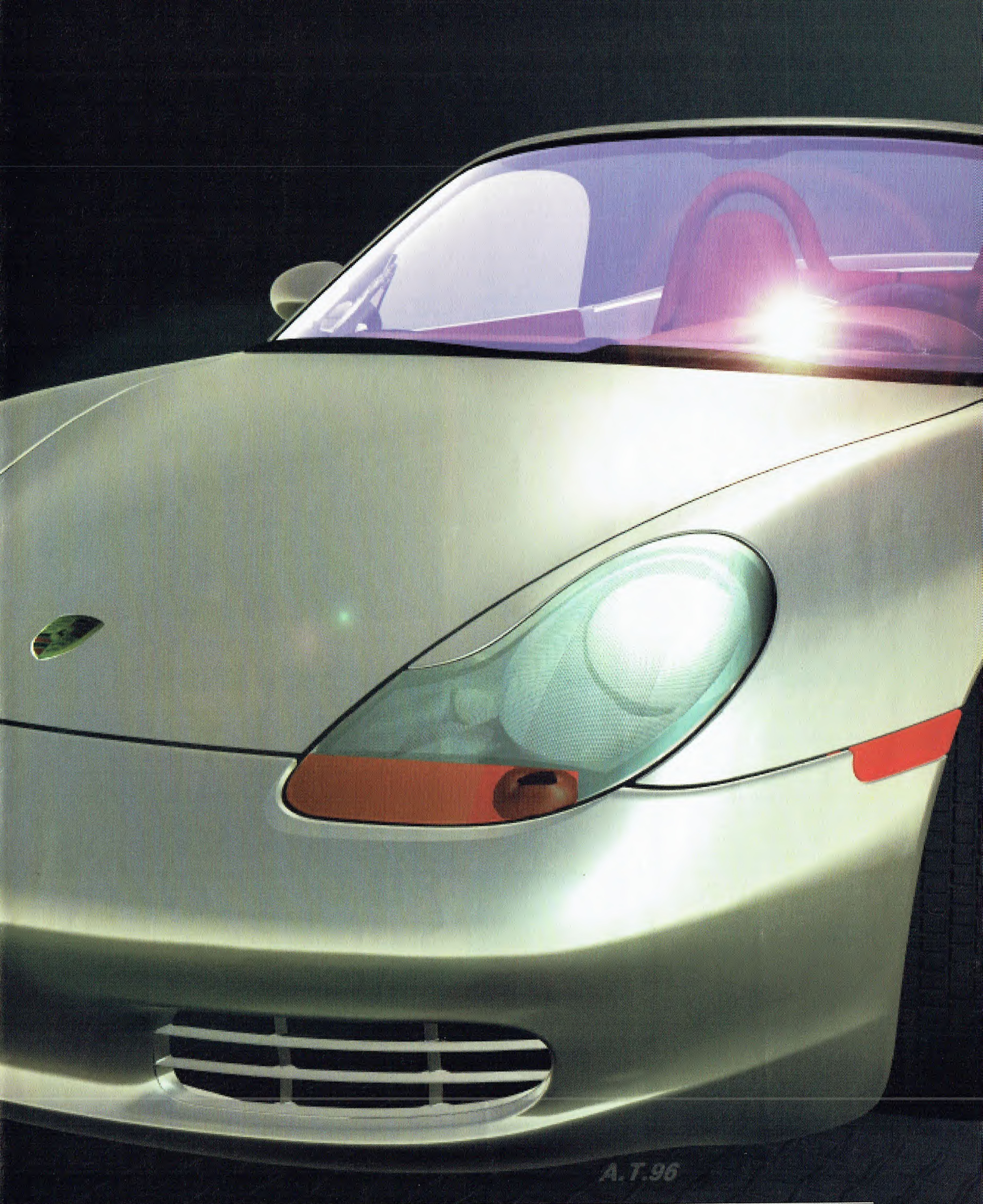
PJ: It's not just another sequel based on an old concept. It's the beginning of a new generation in racing games. I think it's the first time we have given that much at one time in a racing game.

PSM: Would you like to do another licensed car game? Have any other car manufacturers approached you?

PJ: Two manufacturers have approached us, but we're not interested at the moment. Making a game with a license is not always exciting. It was in this case, because of the Boxster and the novelty of the whole thing.

PSM: Was it difficult to implement the split-screen races?

PJ: Extremely, but we were determined to include it. Playing a racing game with a friend is just pure fun. The team wanted to PLAY this game, not just make one.



A.T.96

Need For Speed 2

PUBLISHER: EA	RELEASE: April
CATEGORY: Driving	PLAYERS: 1-2

Need For Speed was one of those titles which polarised players' opinions in favour or against it. You were either blown away, or totally unimpressed. Nonetheless, it proved to be quite successful and the sequel has finally been unveiled.

The secret to *NFS*'s popularity was the feel of the driving. Several very expensive sports car marques were featured including Lamborghini, Ferrari,

Porsche and miles and miles of track was provided to race them on. Each car looked realistic, modelled right down to the minute details of the real thing. But the magic was that each car had its own handling characteristics based around those of the real things. Each car was significantly different and a new style of driving had to be mastered to get the most out of each. That in itself was more than enough to get those with desires of hooning down the freeway in an unobtainable car delirious with pleasure.

If you hunger for more of the

same, prepare to chow down as *Need For Speed 2* is on its way!

The theme in the sequel is more of the same, but better. Say goodbye to your favourite cars, for *NFS 2* has eight new cars to thrash, such as the Jaguar XJ220, the McLaren F1, the Lotus Esprit and the hard to pronounce Isdera Commendatore. You are also given eight new tracks ranging from the Australian outback to the Himalayas and Hollywood. You'll travel through cities and busy intersections, mountain passes and desert tracks in conditions ranging from ice to gravel and cobblestones

during daylight and night hours.

As far as the game is concerned, *NFS 2* caters for drivers of all levels. The game also has a tutorial mode offering driving tips, as well as an arcade mode which allows you to fang down the roads with little regard for real driving dynamics. Driving purists will be pleased to see a higher standard of realism. You can get close to the car in front and use their slipstream to your advantage. *Need For Speed 2* will provide a split-screen two-player game, and the PlayStation's link feature is also supported.



Wing Commander IV

PUBLISHER: EA/Origin	RELEASE: March/April
CATEGORY: Space Opera	PLAYERS: One

Your favourite stars are back in the next big instalment of the legendary *Wing Commander* series. Mark Hamill (*Star Wars*) and Malcolm McDowell (*A Clockwork Orange*, *Star Trek: Generations*) head a professional cast in this highly polished space opera. *Wing Commander* was hugely successful on the PC, but players were divided on what made *Wing Commander III* so good in the first place. Some adored the full motion video cut scenes, feeling Origin had done well in bringing us the first true "Interactive Movie", yet others thought that the actual space combat left much to be desired and despised the obtrusive video segments, feeling the storyline was a little too bland to push the excitement very far. These players also preferred to get out there into the thick of the action. In developing *Wing Commander IV*, Origin has listened to players' concerns and delivered a much more enjoyable game. Firstly, the storyline, acting, and overall feel

of FMV is much classier. The missions are more varied, and there are new aircraft and toys to play with. Overall, the game plays and feels a lot nicer, as well as being prettier to look at. It was released a year ago on the PC. The PlayStation version has taken it's sweet time to arrive, but it seems to have been worth the wait.



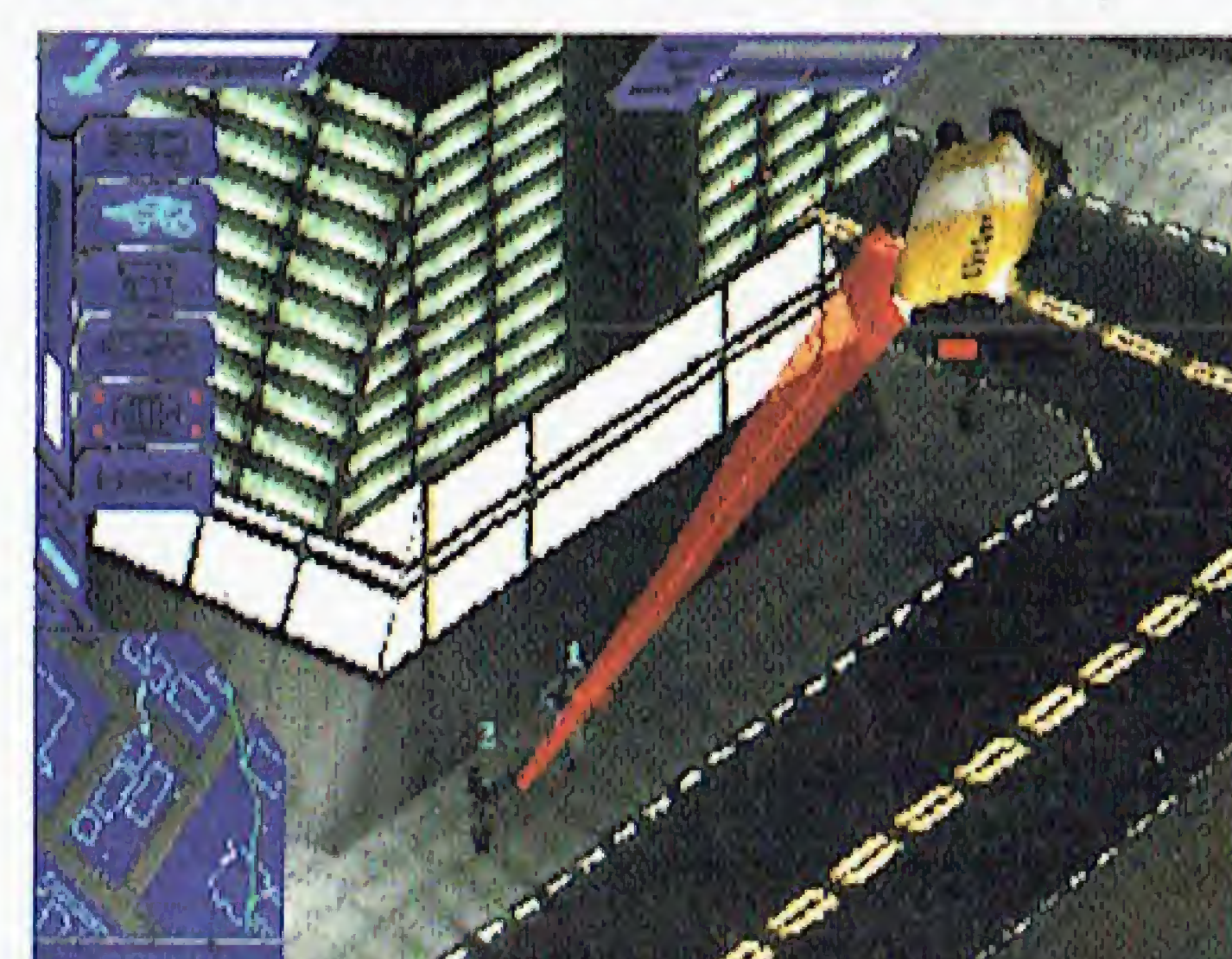
Syndicate Wars

PUBLISHER: EA/Bullfrog	RELEASE: April
CATEGORY: Strategy	PLAYERS: One

Syndicate! The sequel to one of our all-time favourite PC games is about to acquire the PlayStation as a new territory from which to persuade millions of new agents.

The premise in *Syndicate Wars* revolves around a grim future in which cyborg henchmen (and henchwomen) do all the dirty work for vast global corporations. In *Syndicate Wars* you command a death squad of four such cyborg agents and can side with either the Eurocorp Syndicate (responsible for turning the globe into a depressing place of exploitation and deception) or the opposing Church of the New Epoch (religious fanatics fighting for a return to the archaic ways of the Old World). One of the great things about *Syndicate Wars* is that you can go on a rampage through the cities destroying everything in sight. This is thanks to the fully interactive environment you are placed in. If you can see it, you can blow it up! Although this tactic usually won't get you anywhere in terms of completing mission objectives or plot, the thought of being able to actually destroy a city is refreshingly satisfying.

Set over 60 levels, *Syndicate Wars* is about blowing the enemy up in the most ruthlessly efficient way possible. You earn money as you progress in the game, which is in turn spent on research and development. If you thought Q from the 007 movies had an impressive inventory of sneaky weapons, wait till you see what the R&D lads have lined up for you to play with here! Nuclear grenades, razor wire, insanity gas, and even time travel weapons are just a few of the new toys at your agents' disposal. As you progress, you'll be presented with cyborg upgrades and new things that go boom. The graphics look great and the level design is quite interesting. If you're looking for a game with mass destruction and mayhem (let's face it, who isn't?), *Syndicate Wars* will surely satisfy.



Crusader: No Remorse

PUBLISHER: EA/Origin RELEASE: March
CATEGORY: Fighting PLAYERS: One

There's nothing quite like wearing a shiny red suit and holding a Tachyon .99 in one hand to get the attitude police on to you. Enter *Crusader: No Remorse*. This was a big hit on the PC due to the premise that you are a one-man army with an attitude. Well, there is actually a rather cool story behind the game as well. You play the role of a Silencer (dressed in Boba Fett inspired attire), working for the tyrannical World Economic Consortium. After dutifully slaughtering many an innocent victim, you have an attack of conscience and switch to the underground rebel forces opposed to the WEC's evil ways.

Viewed from a top/down isometric perspective, *Crusader: No Remorse* is a dozen or so levels of beautifully crafted destruction and mayhem. The levels are huge, implementing devious designs. If you run into *No Remorse* with your finger on the trigger you'll reach the Game Over screen before you know it. *No Remorse* calls for plenty of careful sneaking about, luring



enemies into traps and making the best of the available cover. This doesn't necessarily mean that the pace of the game is slower, what it does mean is that you have to use your noggin a bit more than is usually required in a shooter.

At your disposal are heaps of some of the coolest weapons seen in a game. There are sixteen all up, ranging from the tame power of the

BA-40 "Patriot" semi-automatic pistol to the awesome destructive capability of the UV-9 "Pulsar" ultra-violet rifle. Some weapons freeze, burn, snap, or just totally disintegrate their targets! There's also such items as the power bomb - an explosive charge on legs that you can walk up to your target via remote-control. Don't think it's that easy though, for as soon as a device

like this is spotted it's most likely to be destroyed before it can cause any harm, and this is another area where *No Remorse* stands out. While the artificial intelligence isn't extraordinary, the enemies in this game won't let you get past them without putting up a major fight.

This game is shaping up to be a must-buy for action fans, being one of the most comprehensive games of this style. Look for the review next issue.



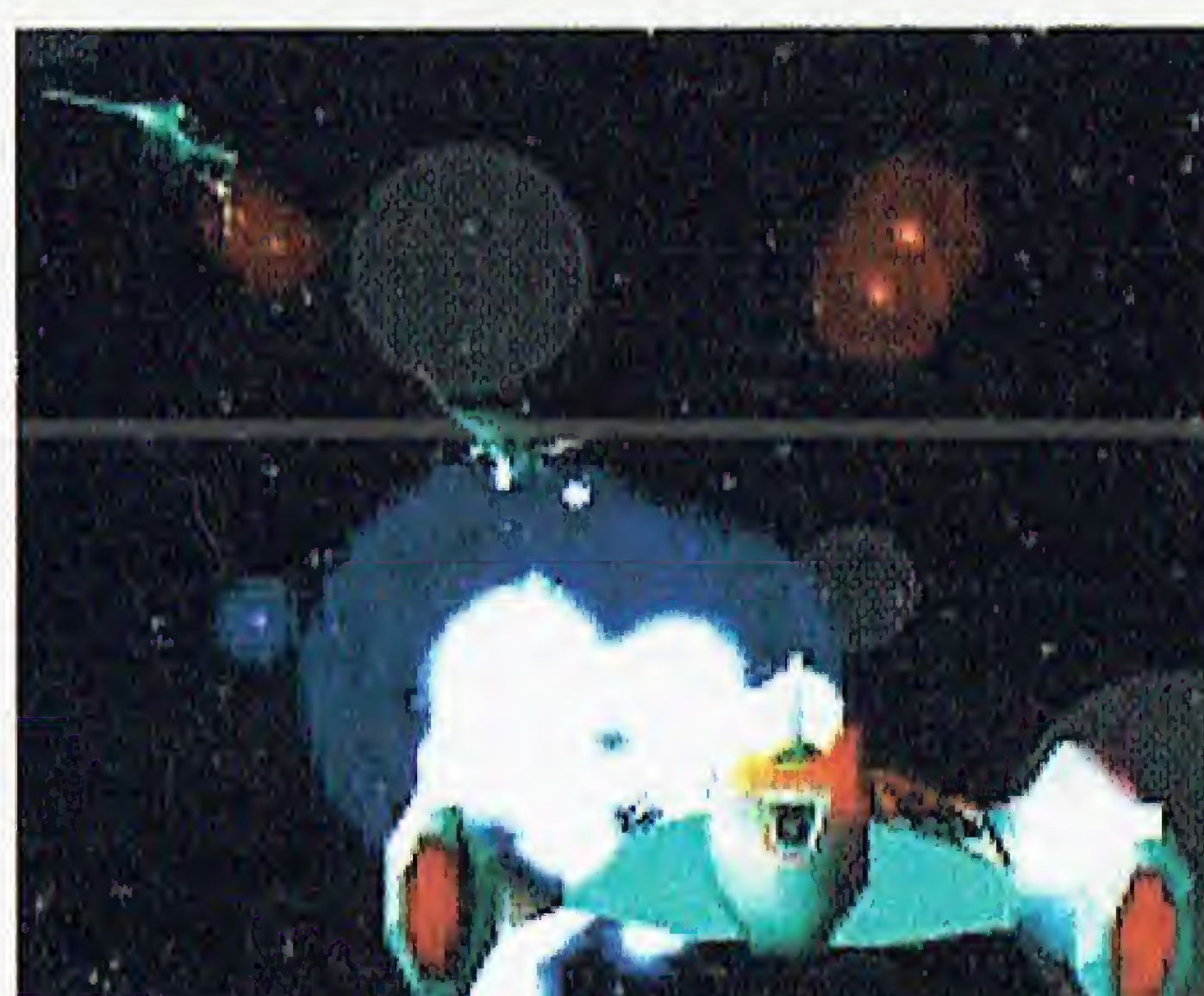
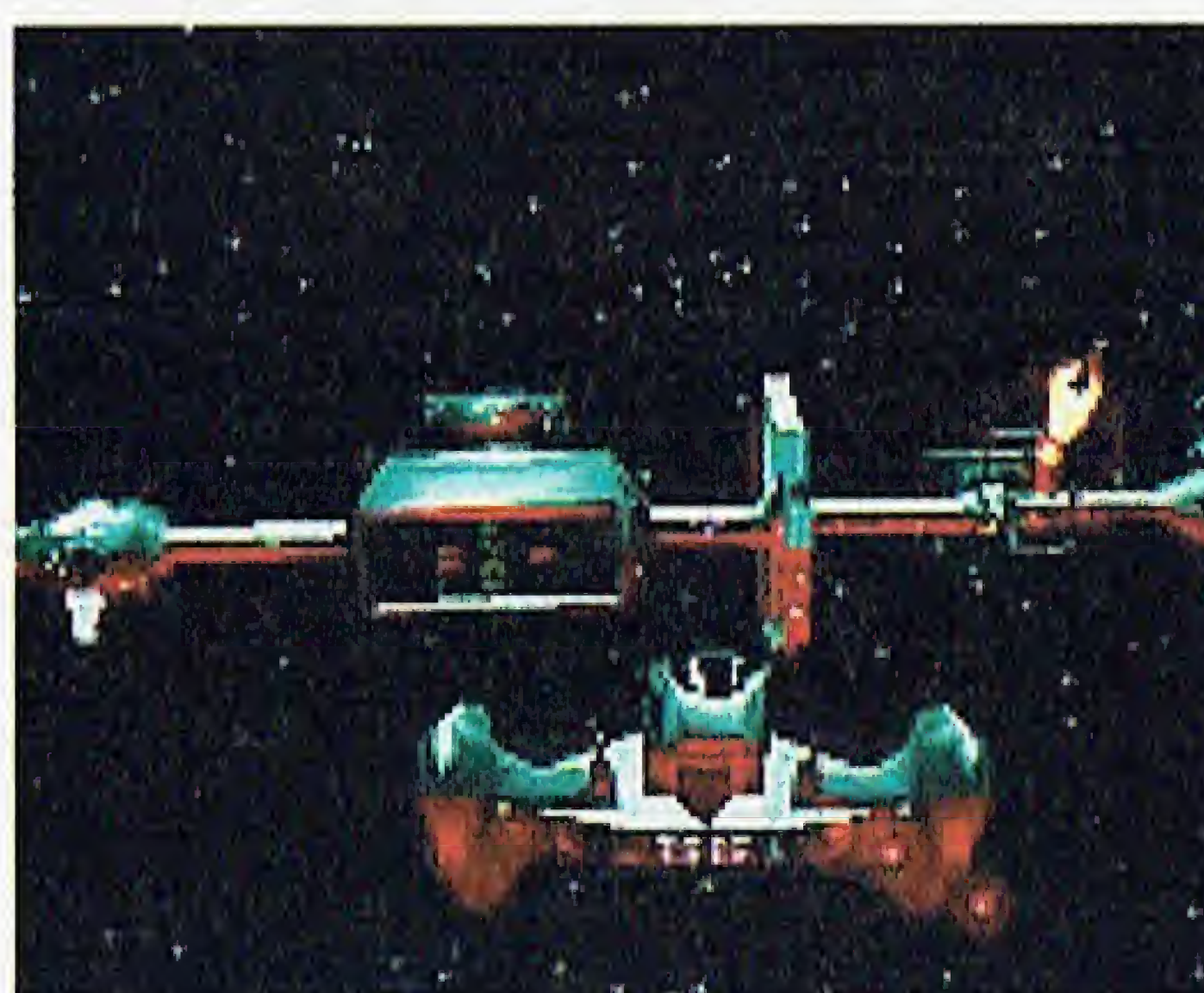
Darklight Conflict

PUBLISHER: EA CATEGORY: Shooter
AVAILABLE: April PLAYERS: Multi-player

In *Darklight Conflict* you play the part of a genetically engineered super-pilot who has the privilege of fighting alongside warriors from a group of aliens known as the Repton Clan. In doing so, you must learn the language and customs of your alien allies so as to gather intelligence for your real mission which is to discover what the Repton Clan is really up to. Conspiracies and cover-ups are the driving force behind this game.

As far as the game itself goes, *Darklight Conflict* is a 3D space combat simulator. There are over 50 single-player missions, but the most fun will come from multi-player games. The PC version will allow a handful of players to play a variety of game modes over a network and the PlayStation is expected to support the link facility and may even have a split-screen setup.

As far as the graphics go, *Darklight Conflict* looks great. All the space craft are made up of detailed polygons and the game overall has a real techie feel to it.



Battle Stations

PUBLISHER: EA CATEGORY: Action
RELEASE: March PLAYERS: 1-2

Battle Stations is a war game based on ship to ship combat. It promises to be a fast action-based game with elements of strategy thrown in. We should also mention that *Battle Stations* is being developed by the same team who brought us the classic *Strike* series (with *Soviet Strike* being the most recent).

The aim is to build up your naval fleet from eight different kinds of vessels on offer, including destroyers, submarines, battleships and aircraft carriers. Not only can you customise your fleet with the type of ships you want, you can also choose from over fifteen different types of weapons to arm them with. These include cruise missiles and torpedoes, but the carriers can take on aircraft such as F-14s. As expected, the quality of the graphics in *Battle Stations* is on par with that of *Soviet Strike* which, in our opinion, looked awesome. Promising to provide hours of single player action, as well multi-player fun (28 missions worth), *Battle Stations* may even surpass the magic of *Soviet Strike*.



Excalibur

PUBLISHER: Telstar RELEASE: Mid-year
CATEGORY: Adventure PLAYERS: One

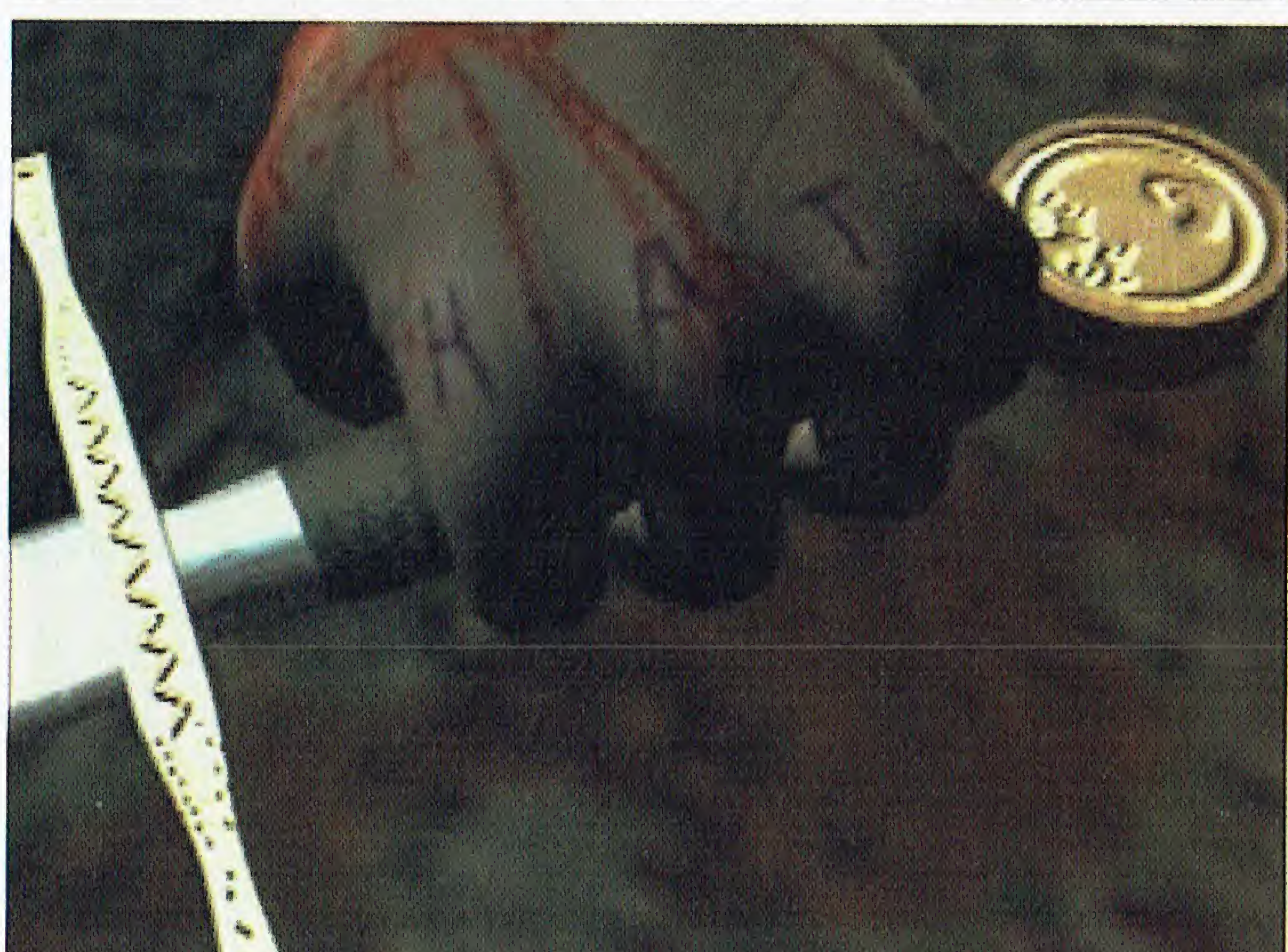
Now before you run off and declare Tempest Software's *Excalibur* as being a *Tomb Raider* rip-off, take solace in the knowledge that the *Excalibur* project was started long before *Tomb Raider* saw the light of day. There are plenty of similarities, however. The game's star is a yet another uber-femme with perfect proportions and delectable dress sense (Lara now has some competition for that title of Queen Of Gaming). The game follows the heroine around in a glorious 3D third-person perspective, and the environment (and characters) are made up of plenty of pretty polygons. Heck, both games even require you to guide the character through a massive network of underground chambers to successfully finish the game. That, though, is where the similarities end. Set in the future, the story ties in with the mystic legends of Camelot. The stunning intro shows a couple of souped-up tech-soldiers warping back into Arthurian times and blowing away (with lasers of course) the guardians of the sword Excalibur, which they then make off with. Armed with a mean looking sword yourself (this chopper is huge!), your task is to find the fabled sword of King Arthur.

Excalibur is more of an RPG than an action game, which means not only do you kill some of the nasties, you get to talk to them as well. Conversations play an important part in *Excalibur*, talking to people yields hints, clues and even important items which are needed to progress. People will also send you on mini-quests (the meat of an RPG) with which successful

completion is also rewarded with special items. You can carry lots of things in your inventory, and there's a map to help you keep track of where you've been.

While the graphics don't appear to have the jaw-dropping appearance of *Tomb Raider*, they're still pleasing to the eye and do wonders for the atmosphere. As for the characters themselves, they look great. Tempest has put a lot of work into getting a unique look and feel for each character, and the result is a huge array of cool-looking nasties to take care of.

Excalibur looks like being a whole lot of fun. It's not a fast paced game, but in the minds of most RPG enthusiasts this is a good thing.



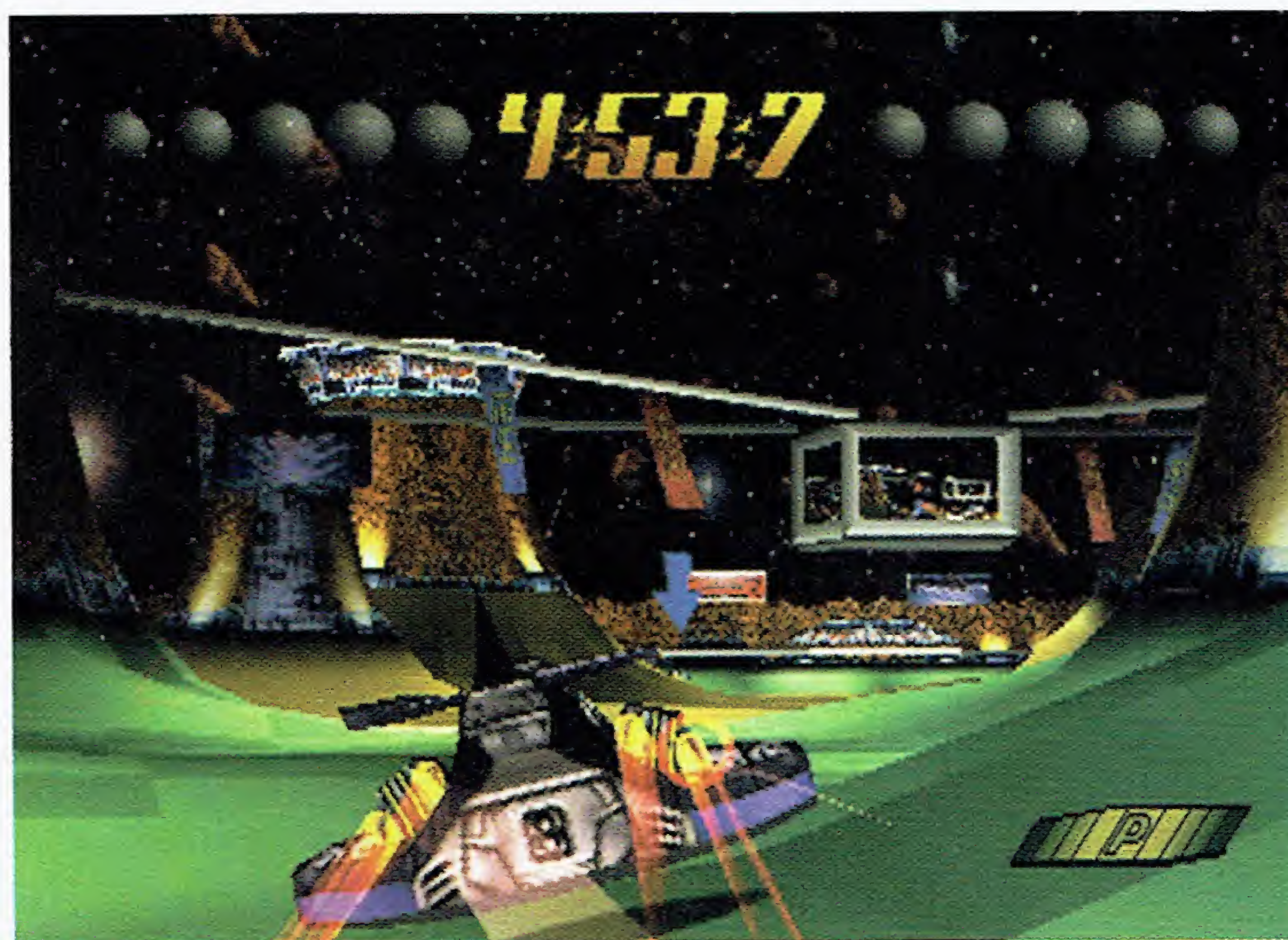
BallBlazer Championships

PUBLISHER: LucasArts RELEASE: May
CATEGORY: Sports PLAYERS: 1-2

How's this for a nostalgia trip? *BallBlazer* first appeared on the old Commodore 64 and Atari systems. In 1985. When LucasArts was known as LucasFilm Games. Sigh. *BallBlazer* was an action packed futuristic sports title, with the aim of the game being to get a fiery orb into the opposition's goal (much like soccer). It sure didn't look pretty, but it played well and scored

many a fan. 12 years later, *BallBlazer* is getting the 32-bit treatment.

You'd think a background story is really unnecessary for a sports title, but being a futuristic sports title, LucasArts has obliged. Centuries of intergalactic war has devastated the universe. It is decided that scores will be settled through a competitive match between people in the arena, playing a ruthless game of ball. Rather than being "exposed" as in contemporary games, the competitors in *BallBlazer* move about in "hovercraft" like ships,



complete with an arsenal of weaponry to keep the opponents on their toes.

We've seen an almost finished version of the game and can happily report that it looks fantastic. The graphics run in the PlayStation's hi-res mode and look just delicious, with beautifully smooth shading and lighting effects a stand-out feature. As long as the gameplay can match this level of presentation (and we've no reason to believe it won't), *BallBlazer Championships* will be a winner.



Herc's Adventures

PUBLISHER: LucasArts RELEASE: May
CATEGORY: Adventure PLAYERS: 1-2

Greek mythology is the basis for LucasArt's new two-player action-adventure game. Herc's Adventures sends the players off on an epic quest to save the cradle of Western civilisation from ruin. Each hero possesses varying levels of speed, strength, toughness and fighting ability to help them

achieve greatness. For instance, feel like picking up temples or throwing around boulders? Hercules is THE man. Need to outrun the gods? Try Atlanta, Herc's fleet-footed partner. Then there's Jason, who's young, smart, and wields a mean sword and sling.

The press release promises great graphics, compelling gameplay and the unique brand of humour players have come to expect from LucasArts.

As *Herc's Adventures* begins,

Hades has kidnapped Persephone, the goddess of fertility, and plans to make her the queen of his dead minions. While imprisoned,

life in the mortal world begins to wither because Persephone cannot bring spring to the land. If Hercules fails to rescue her, all of Greece will die of starvation. Zeus, king of the gods, chooses not to interfere directly, but decides to send a mortal hero to save Persephone.

In *Herc's Adventures*, players battle countless gods, mythical creatures and other assorted bad guys throughout the game's vast field of play. Action is viewed from a third-person, top-down point of view. To win, players seek the support of each of the Greek gods they encounter in their travels. Tasks must be completed for each

god, and successful players are rewarded with a magical key allowing them access to a new area. When all the items are collected and the gods suitably appeased, the player is allowed to enter the Underworld to face-off against Hades in a deadly battle for Persephone.

Herc's Adventures is expected to be on the shelves in the not too distant future and we'll have a review next issue.

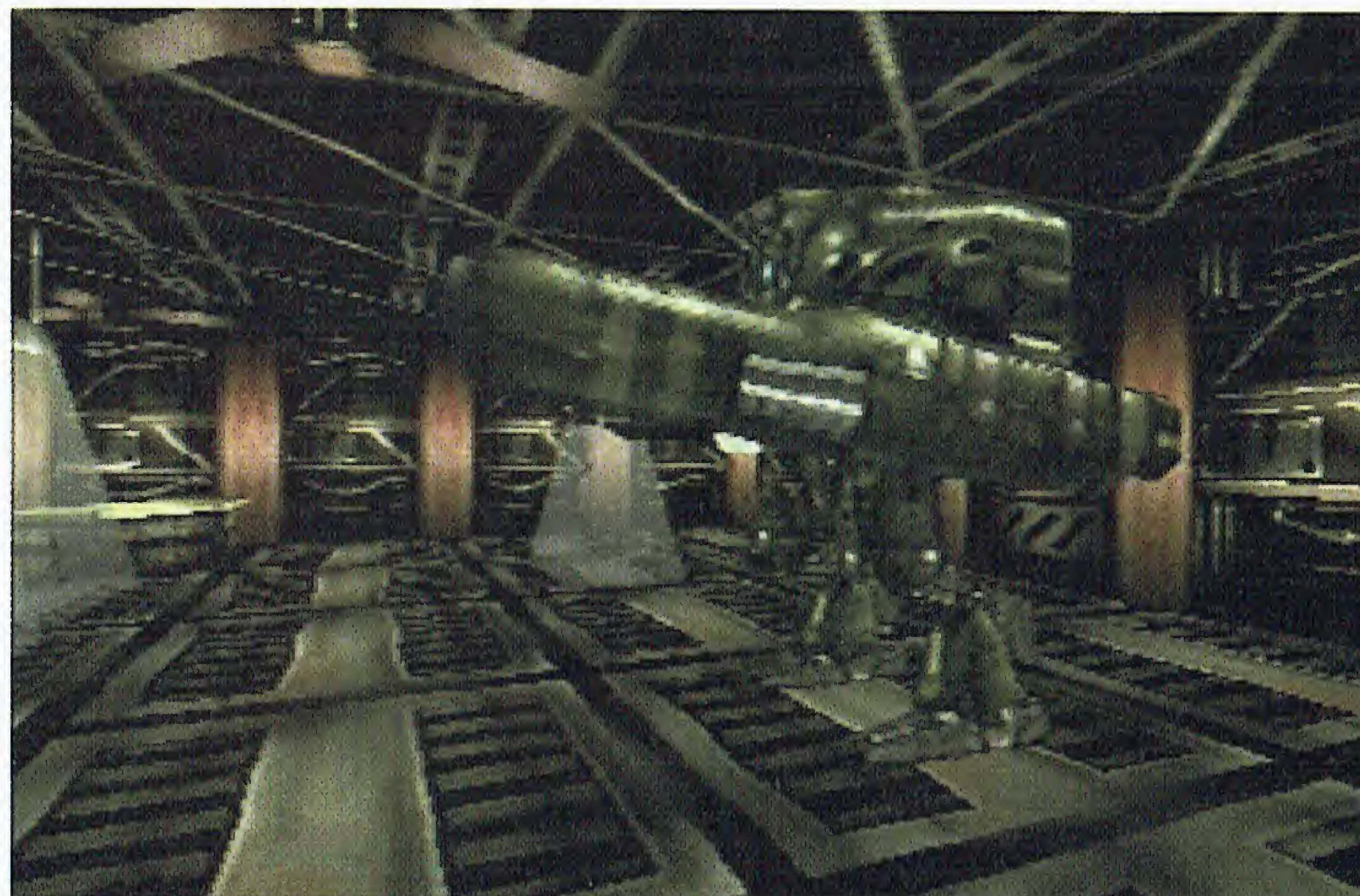


Epidemic

PUBLISHER: Sony RELEASE: April
CATEGORY: Doom-style PLAYERS: One

After a deadly plague known as the Gigari virus sweeps across the Earth killing much of its population, the few remaining survivors take refuge in an underground haven called Neurol City. This city was established by the Baifros Group and is controlled by an all-knowing computer by the name of Cyrus. However, the Baifros people have a more nefarious motive than just looking after the population, their goal is to create a genetically pure race by selectively weeding out those who they deem to be 'tainted'.

This sinister post-apocalyptic scenario is the setting of *Epidemic*, in which you take on the role of a head-strong young man who's girl has been infected by the Gigari virus. Once the virus has entered a human's body, the prognosis is about one week to live, but after pleading with the girl's doctor our young hero discovers that there is an elusive cure, found in the pollen of a flower. But, wouldn't you know it, that particular flower is extinct everywhere but in the forbidden zone. It's a race against time for our hero to find the said flower, but along the way he gets

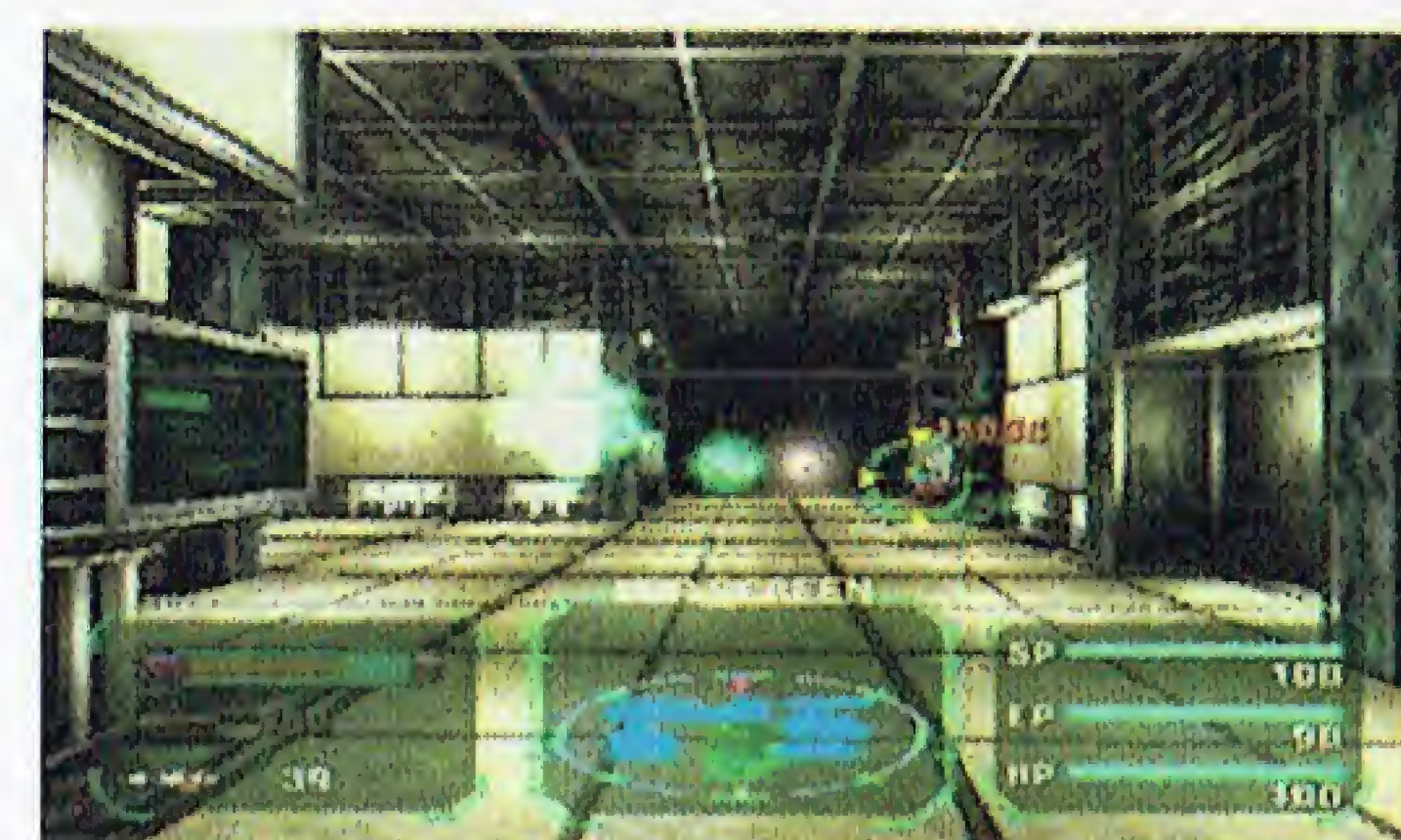
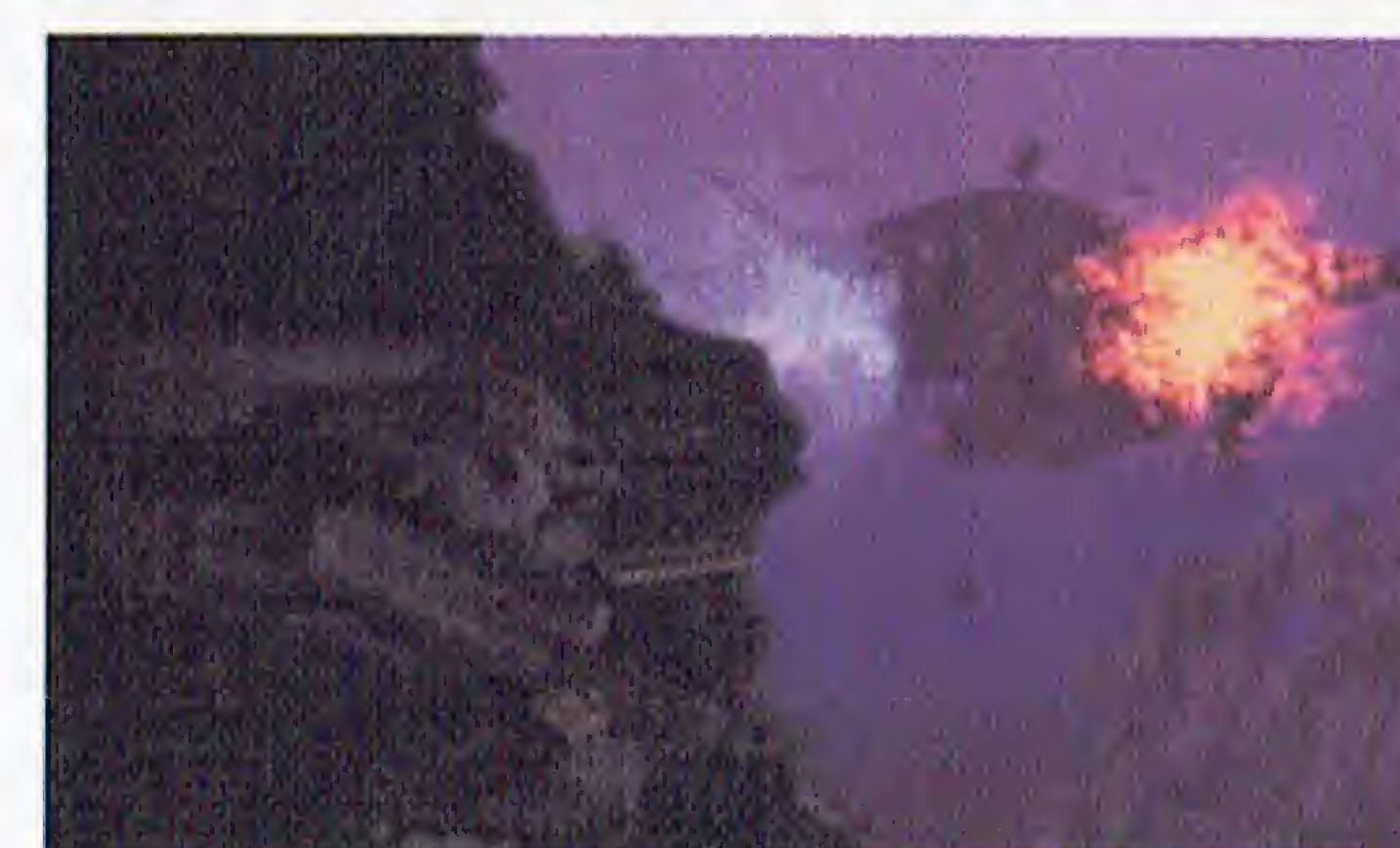
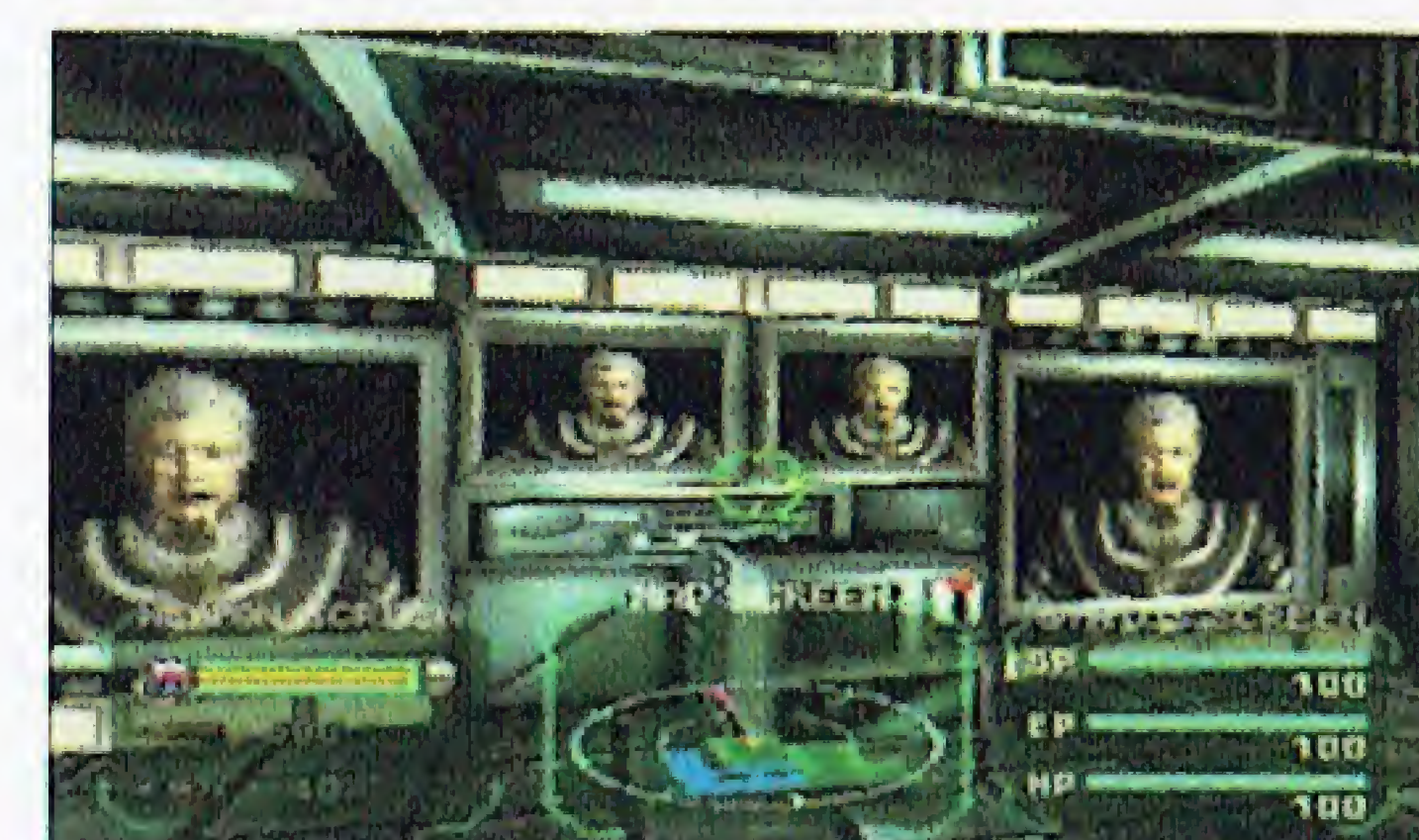


caught up with a group of resistance fighters opposed to Baifros.

The game is a first-person perspective shooter in which you walk around in a battle suit fighting swarms of security droids dispatched

by Cyrus while looking for pass cards to the next level and so-forth. Along the way you can access computer terminals to find out more about the virus and what you're up against, as well as meeting a number of helpful and not-so helpful characters.

Epidemic has been developed by one of Sony's Japanese development teams and carries an atmosphere which will be familiar to fans of manga and anime. It also happens to be the sequel to *Kileak the Blood*, but we won't hold that against it until we've had a proper play of it.



King Of Fighters '95

PUBLISHER: SNK RELEASE: April/May
CATEGORY: 2D Fighting PLAYERS: One or two

The 2D fighting genre isn't dead, *Street Fighter Alpha 2* proves it, and there are plenty of other developers out there committed to bringing us more of the side-on variety. While many prefer the 3D fighting style, a great deal of us still love the pace of the 2D games. This is, of course, providing they are done well. There is plenty of rubbish out there which has tarnished the otherwise good name of

the humble beat 'em up, but there are great ones out there as well. Looking at *King Of Fighters*, we're inclined to think that while this may not be the hottest of 2D fighters around, it definitely won't be the worst. Wait a minute - *King Of Fighters '95*? Last time we checked it was 1997 and Elvis was dead. Why Sony plans to release such a sated game is beyond us, but as long as the final experience is a good one, who really cares?

King Of Fighters '95 follows closely where the arcade version left off. There are a huge number of



characters to choose from, the majority of the fighters are neat looking dashing twenty-somethings, with the token females, huge dude and old crusty dude thrown in for

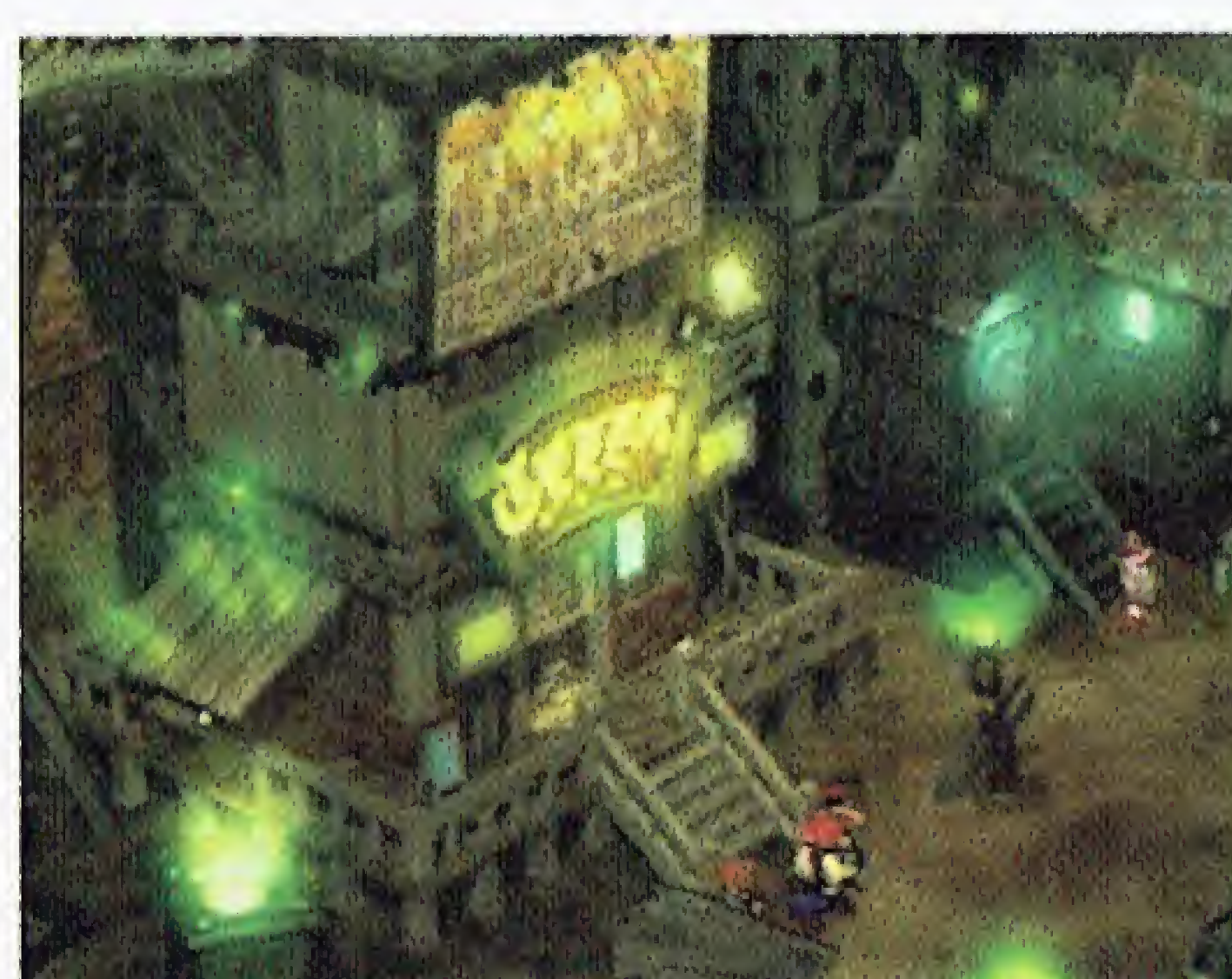
good measure. What's more, most of the male competitors don't look much different from the others. In the stead, there are heaps of moves to pull off and there appears to be enough in this game to keep determined players busy for ages. The trade-off being, again, that most of these moves seem to be a little too similar and cliched, with plenty of characters having fireballs and dragon punch moves up their sleeves. *King Of Fighters '95* was (and still is) very popular in the arcades so if you've been longing to play it at home, your wish has been granted.

Final Fantasy VII

PUBLISHER: **Squaresoft** RELEASE: **End of year**
 CATEGORY: **RPG** PLAYERS: **One**

Final Fantasy VII was always shaping up to be a bit of a smash hit. The beautiful graphics, the promise of a storyline fit for any feature length film and the simple reality that it was an RPG got many feverish in anticipation. That, and the fact that the *Final Fantasy* series has produced a stream of must-have titles (on another system which we won't mention), meant that the launch in Japan was always going to be a special event. Well, the launch in Japan was a phenomenal event. A staggering 1 million units of the game were pre-ordered before its release. While this all sounds very impressive, it's nothing compared to what happened next. Two million *Final Fantasy VII* CDs sold in the first three days following the launch. Lines in computer stores stretched for hundreds of metres, all with people wanting one specific thing. Think about it - two million copies in three days (that's 30 000 copies sold an hour)? In one country? Is it possible to move that much stock in such a short space of time? Usually, no. This

was the primary concern for Square (the developers of the *FF* series) when devising a marketing strategy for its release - how to sell as many titles as possible in the shortest space of time. A logistical nightmare. So Square came up with the idea of a kiosk designed specifically to sell games which would be easy to access and easy to use. Forming an alliance with a number of rival Japanese developers, Square developed the Digi-Cube and put it into over 15 000 different places of convenience - all-night food stores, the corner mart, petrol stations and the like, many of which are open twenty four hours. This large "box" displays all the various games on sale, as well as having a monitor to preview real-time of each game available. After choosing the game, the buyer receives a CD-sized card of the title which is exchanged at the cashier for the CD itself. This has greatly increased the availability of games in Japan (a country gone mad over kiosks and vending machines), and done wonders for the sales of *FFVII*. In fact, when consumers missed out on buying the game from conventional stores (due to closing times), many lined up out front of the



Digi-Cubes. Peak Digi-Cube sales times were reported to be at 11:00 pm! Square revealed that the Digi-Cube was designed specifically to sell *Final Fantasy VII*, and that after a slow beginning, the Digi-Cube has finally been accepted as a viable alternative to games stores.

As for the game itself, we here in Australia will have to wait till the end of the year for its release. The 3 CD bonanza, which cost around \$40 million to create, may arrive in a censored form. Dealing with sexuality and other demure behaviour, *FFVII* is causing a major headache for Sony in the US. Knowing the strict standards Australian sensors are renowned for, it's more than likely that we'll get a cut version too. Oh well. Still can't wait for the game though!



40 TONS OF STEEL AND GUNS

MechWarrior 2 was unleashed on the PC in 1995 to critical acclaim from game players world wide. It has finally made its way to the PlayStation. Despite concerns that Sony's grey box wouldn't be up to the task, Activision has surprised everyone by turning out one of the most thorough PC to console conversions ever seen. How did they manage it? We spoke to the producer of the PlayStation version, Murali Tegulapalle, to find out.

PSM: What are the main changes you had to make?

MT: The brunt of the changes, with the exception of changes due to hardware constraints, has to deal with gameplay. MechWarrior 2 PC is a great sim. This type of game goes over extremely well in the computer world. The PlayStation player, in contrast, generally craves games that are a bit more fast-paced and action oriented. As a result, we designed MW2 for the PSX with both of these points in mind - we wanted to make the game faster and more action oriented, but we still wanted to stay true to the MechWarrior universe.

PSM: Some of the Mech customisation options have been scaled down or replaced with power ups. Was this because it was easier to implement on the PSX this way or because of the different market involved?

MT: Mech customisation was changed to accommodate the console market. Adding, removing and moving weapons, heat sinks and armour is a lot to deal with. So, we gave the Mechs two configurations (others can be activated via a cheat), and allow the user to pre-group weapons before beginning the mission. This allows the player to pick his Mech, choose a configuration and group his weapons very quickly before launching into the heat of battle.

PSM: Was any of the original PC code used, or did you have to start from scratch?

MT: We wanted to take full advantage of the PlayStation's power and, as a result, decided to code everything from scratch. We did NOT use one line of code from the PC version. This allowed us to add textures to every object in the world, increase the number of Mechs and vehicles in the game and still maintain 20 frames per second (MW2 for the PC ran at approximately 8 to 12 FPS).

PSM: Did you have much input from the development team which created the original MechWarrior 2?

MT: Our developers, Quantum Factory, Inc., had a tremendous amount of input - they conceived the original 'port' over to the PlayStation. Utilizing their design and then incorporating the input of our in-house MW2 console design team, our creative affairs department and the results from focus group testing, we were able to come up with a final design.

PSM: What advantages do you feel the PSX version has over its PC counterpart?

MT: The PSX version of MechWarrior 2 has quite a few of advantages over the PC version. These include:

- Fully texture-mapped world - Everything is texture-mapped - the ground, sky, buildings, Mechs, missiles, etc.

- Gouraud shading - Everything in the world is also shaded to provide a simulated light source and realistic shading effects.

- Faster gameplay - The MechWarrior 2 PSX engine runs at 20 FPS.

- More action - Up to twice as many Mechs and objects per mission than the original PC version.

- Power-Ups - Eight power-ups in the game - Invincibility, Stealth, Fire-Rate Increase, Health, Jump Jet, Speed Increase, Weapons Reload and Heat Sink Augmenter.

- Brand new missions - Sixteen brand new missions designed exclusively for the console systems - these missions were NOT taken from Ghost Bear's Legacy (an extra missions upgrade for the PC) or Mercenaries (the PC follow up to MechWarrior 2).

PSM: Did you have much trouble working out a good controller setup for the PlayStation? We noticed it has been changed from the earlier versions we were shown.

MT: Controls are one of the most important features of any game. As a result, we needed to test various combinations of controller setups to land the right 'set' of controls - this is why the alpha and beta versions had many different controller setups. We tested the controls over a course of several months of play testing and were able to finally find a setup which we feel is optimal.

In addition, the optimal control configuration utilises all twelve buttons. However, the use of this particular configuration may take some practice. As a result, we actually have modular configurations in that the default is very basic and there are seven other configurations which expand from the basic setup to the most feature filled configuration. Hopefully, this will allow the user, if he so chooses, to slowly get used to the optimal configuration or jump right into the full blown setup.

In addition, the game also supports analog joysticks. Try Sony's Dual Analog Joystick, it works very well and feels like it was made for the game.

PSM: What limitations did you come up against? Were these due to the structure of the game or the PlayStation hardware?

MT: Essentially, when converting a game from the PC to the PlayStation, there are inherently two types of constraints.

Firstly, RAM - The PlayStation currently has 3.5Mb of RAM. Most PC games take up 8Mb and some of the more recent games can take up to 12 or even 16Mb of RAM - MechWarrior's minimum RAM requirement for the PC is 8Mb. This essentially boils down to approximately one half of the RAM available for us to make the PSX version. In addition, there is an incredible soundtrack which accompanies the great gameplay - we wanted to make sure that we can play this as well. As a result, we needed to load all of the data for each mission into RAM.

This posed quite a problem for us. What we had to do was compress some data and, when that wasn't enough, we shared some data (e.g. certain textures were used for Mechs and other objects in the game). Utilising these

two methods, we were able to get around the RAM constraint. After seeing the final product, I believe we have compromised nothing in doing so.

Secondly, controller input - The PC has a 96 button keyboard, joystick inputs, foot pedal inputs, etc. This allows games which are written for the PC to have as many features as the game's designers wish. MW2 for the PC utilised quite a few of these inputs. The PlayStation's standard digital controller has twelve inputs. That's quite a disparity. In designing MW2 for the PSX, we had to figure out a way to make the game fun while utilising only twelve buttons.

We accomplished this by first removing any features that were superfluous (e.g., satellite view). Please keep in mind that we didn't just indiscriminately remove features. From the start, we designed the type of game which we felt the console user expected, while still keeping to the MechWarrior 2 universe.

Once we pared down the functions, we then combined several features into one button by multiplexing. An example of this is the Target Select function. On the PC version, one key targets the object underneath the reticle, another cycles through all of the targets, and a third selects the closest target. In the PlayStation version we accomplished all three functions by using only one key - the Target Select key. If the user has an object underneath the reticle and presses the Target Select key, the game will target that object. If there is nothing underneath the reticle and he either presses and holds or taps repeatedly, the game will cycle through all of the active objects in the mission. Finally, if the user double-taps the Target Select key with nothing underneath the reticle, he will target the closest object.

Another constraint is the type of games a console gamer expects. MechWarrior 2 is a great sim, but console gamers tend to want faster action and gameplay. We needed to combine the best of both worlds. To accomplish this, we had to make quite a few changes. Some examples are condensing missions so that the 'NAV' points are closer together, modifying some objectives in missions, increasing the number of enemy Mechs and vehicles in the world (50% to 100% more per mission), making the AI much more aggressive, and speeding up the gameplay so there is much more action.

PSM: When PC games are converted to consoles there will inevitably be

differences, yet despite the obvious changes in Mech 2, we think the PlayStation version is remarkably faithful to the original in concept. We have noticed, however, that many PC to PSX conversions (C&C for example) have suffered as a result of the limitations imposed by the PSX hardware. Do you think it's fair to make such concessions, or should developer's efforts be directed to original projects?

MT: Obviously, if the game is incredible on the PC side (as both MechWarrior 2 and Command & Conquer are), it would be a great injustice to try to drastically change the game in the conversion. However, reality sets in when you realize that not only are there hardware constraints which prevent one from truly mimicking the PC version on the consoles, but also that the player on the console systems doesn't have the same tastes as that of the PC player.

This problem needs to be addressed at the outset of development by determining how much you are going to 'give' due to hardware and taste constraints. We went for a combination sim/action game because we wanted to get the best of both worlds - add faster gameplay and more action but still stay true to the original game.

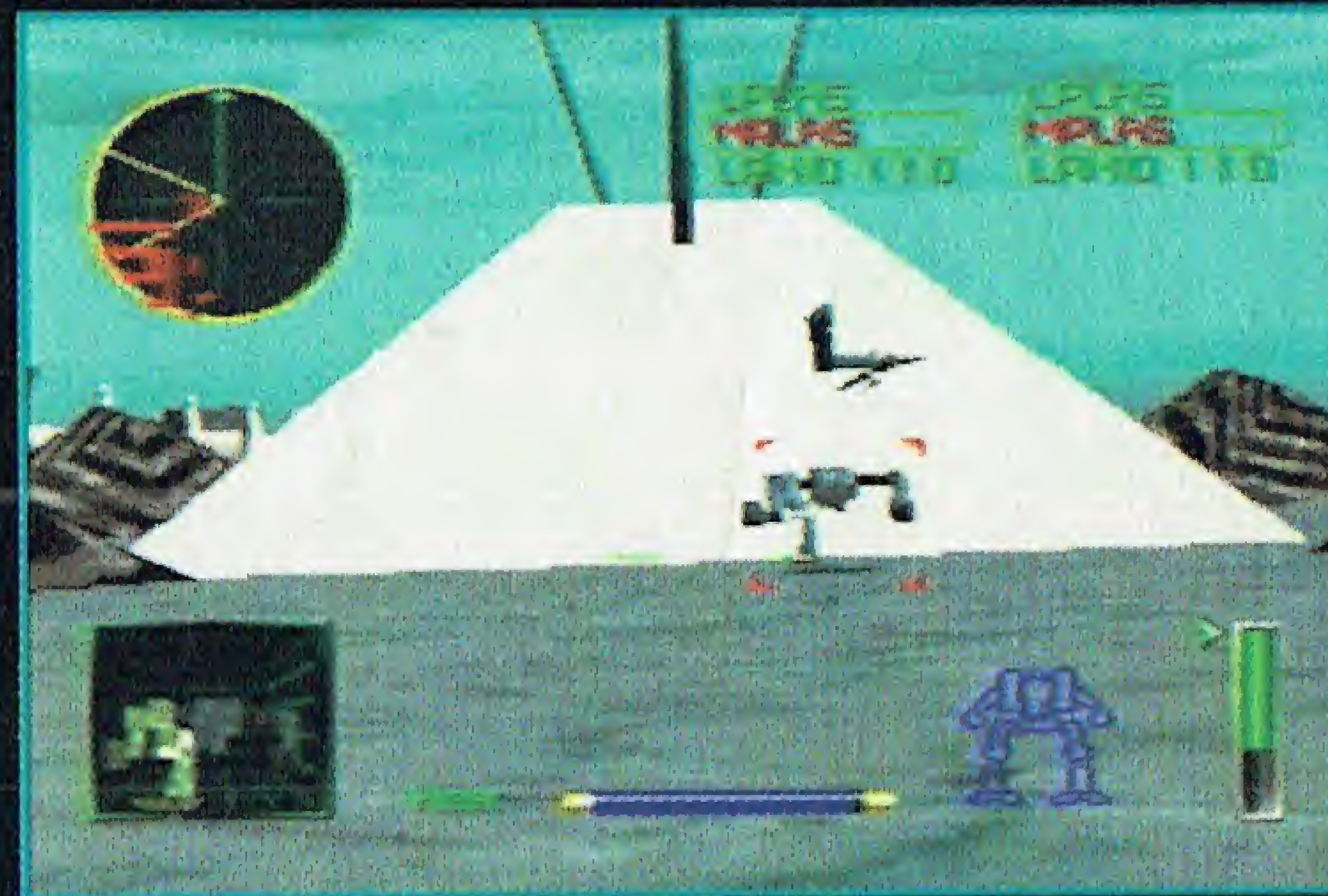
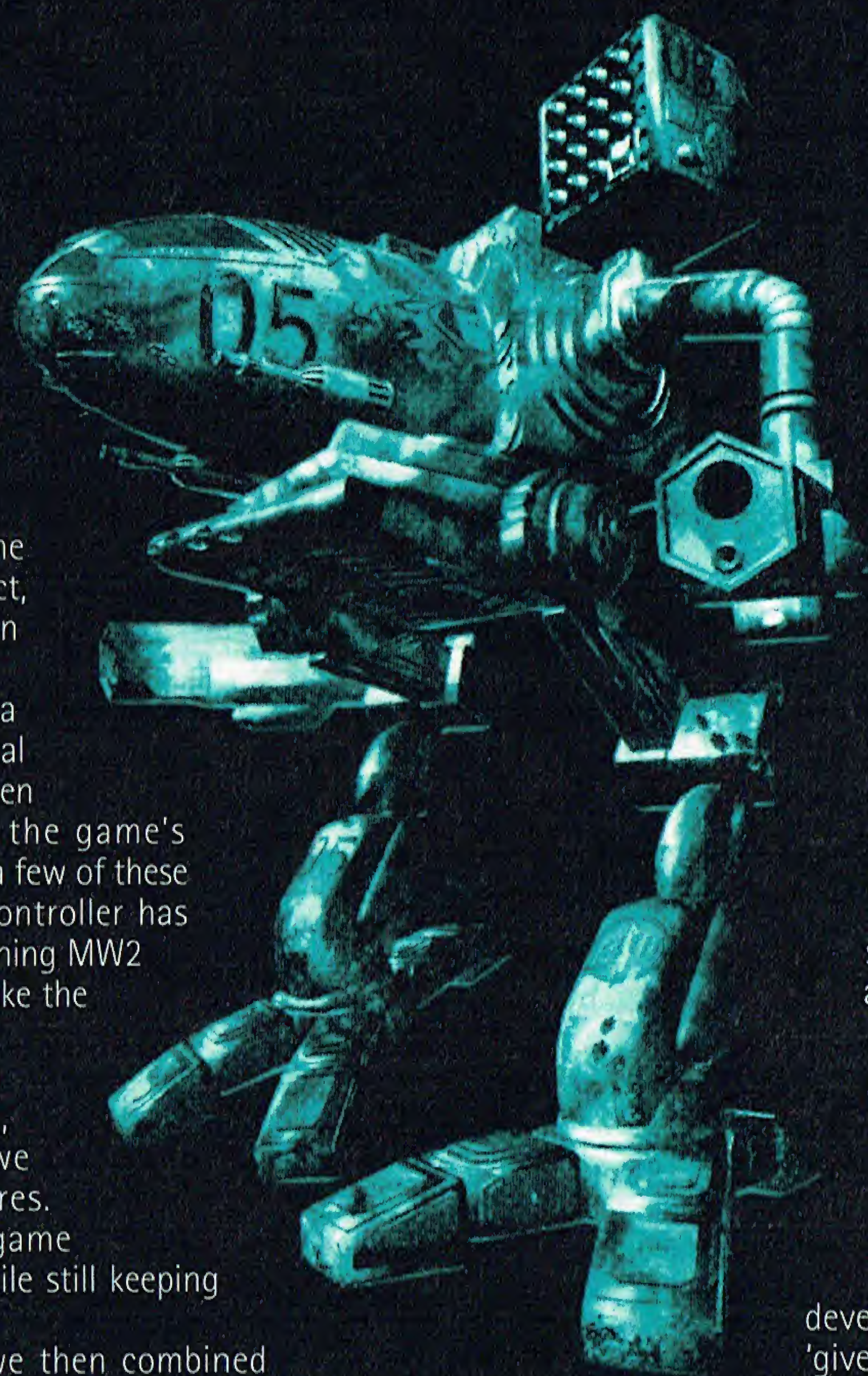
One point which should be made is that no matter how well you design a 'port', some games just do not translate well - that may be the problem some PC to PSX conversions face. We were able to accomplish all of our goals as a result of having an extremely talented group of individuals, as well as being fortunate enough to have a game that crossed over well.

PSM: Is there much more that could be done with this sort of game on the PlayStation if you didn't have to stick to the guidelines set out by the PC version?

MT: If we did not stay true to the guidelines of the PC version, we would have been able to produce a different type of game. However, it would not be MechWarrior 2. Also, we don't believe removing the MechWarrior guidelines would have made it a better game, just a different one.

PSM: Are you working on any more Mech 2-style games for the PlayStation? Any chance of Mercenaries making the transition?

MT: At the present time we've just wrapped up Mech2. There are other projects in the works, however, none of them are set in stone. As far as Mercenaries for the PlayStation is concerned, we do not yet know what the probability is of that game making the move over to the PSX.



CLASSIFICATION

AS YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED, COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAMES NOW HAVE LITTLE SILVER STICKERS DENOTING THEIR CLASSIFICATION BY THE OFLC. TO SOME THEY ARE A WAY OF JUDGING THE GAME'S CONTENT, YET FOR OTHERS THEY ARE A BLEMISH ON THE COVER ARTWORK. PETER MACKAY* EXPLAINS THE POLITICAL HISTORY AND REASONING BEHIND THEM.



I do not know one single person in the industry, or player, that does not see some value in identifying the stronger elements of entertainment products in order (that) younger people are not confronted by that which is inappropriate for their age. The problem is, who decides what that is?

Many people can be forgiven for being confused by the content of their computer games; particularly those rated 'M' & 'MA'. If one looks at the content of films & videos with the same rating, the games bear no resemblance.

This quite simply came about because a number of Senators decided to pick up the general issue of violence as a major issue on their political bandwagon and turned their attention to computer games. There were two immediate problems associated with this in my view; first, the long running assumptions about entertainment (films & videos) directly affecting people's behaviour have never been proved to have any validity whatsoever. Second, when computer game (and plain computer) illiterate people in power begin to assess game content and those who play them, there is great potential for a less than objective outcome.

Obviously, every individual will have differing opinions on this issue, but no matter what you may personally think of the classification system for film & video, it has been around for some time and can be said to be generally accepted as a reasonable method of identifying 'age appropriate' material (give or take a few decisions!). So, what made the computer games classification scheme so much more restrictive?

In my view, two major driving forces were behind the very strict guidelines given to the OFLC by the Federal Government. One, a small group of conservative Senators have for a long time held the belief that Australia needs much stricter controls on censorship and a more conservative moral code, and have been vigorously targeting entertainment products as the predominant cause of our moral decay. One wonders what they were targeting before videos, or was the world a perfect place then?

Secondly, this short sighted and immovable attitude has always needed to find another 'reason' for stricter censorship. They did this by strongly suggesting that not only does violence in entertainment products have a direct effect on our youth, but that this 'effect' is intensified when our children actively engage in 'interactive entertainment'. In other words, if players are controlling the characters on screen, they must therefore be

further influenced to commit violent acts or to be desensitised to violence!

The Senate Select Committee responsible for advising the Government on this issue failed to come up with any facts or commonsense reasoning to support this belief, but did succeed in gaining a very strict games classification system by this unsubstantiated scare tactic. One other fact became obvious in their shortsighted deliberations - they believed all game players were 'kiddies'.

All this led to the Government following the Committee's recommendation that the games classification system should not have an 'R' classification. The Committee further suggested that parents were mostly technology illiterate and would therefore be unable to supervise their own children's game playing! This led to a further recommendation being accepted - that game content be classified much more strictly than film and video. So, the games classification system not only had a complete category removed, but what was left was to be treated much more strictly than the equivalent film or video content. A double whammy, so to speak.

The outcome is, ironically, that research undertaken by the OFLC (after the introduction of the scheme) into computer games failed to find any evidence to support any of those Senators' silly notions. Quite the opposite, in fact. There is to be a reassessment of this scheme sometime in the near future and it will be interesting to see if anything changes. Perhaps the vast majority of gamers (adults) should identify themselves to the Government and remind them about ticks in boxes at election times! I must also point out that the OFLC simply administers the system; if you find a need to complain or ask questions, you should direct it to the Federal Attorney General (if you're going to do it, go to the top!).

So, what does it all mean? Well, all games are now supposed to have official OFLC classification stickers on the box. These identify the suggested age appropriate for the content. Classification guidelines and the symbols used can be obtained from the OFLC by anyone.

The classification categories are, 'G', 'G8', 'M' & 'MA'.

Basically, 'G' content should have little to worry anyone. 'G8' suggests there is content with a mild strength best suited to those eight years and over (basically, a PG equivalent). 'M' is suggested for those 15 years and above, but can be sold to those under 15 years (it was anticipated that those below

OF VIDEO GAMES



this age would be supervised by their parents in buying such classified games and hence is not restricted in law, but left to parental control if needed). 'MA', however, can only be sold to those 15 years and above.

Other than 'G', all other categories also identify the reason why a game received its classification. You will notice such classification stickers as:

- G8** - Low Level Violence
- M** - Medium Level Violence
- MA** - Adult Themes & Medium Level Coarse Language
- MA+** - High Level Animated Violence

Beyond the initial scare tactics and gross over assumptions made by the Senate Select Committee, what two years of actually classifying computer games showed clearly was the absolute nonsense of their arguments (all of which we knew to be the case anyway).

I sincerely hope the games industry and voting age players take the opportunity to make their opinions known when a reassessment of the scheme takes place. And, even more, I sincerely hope the press can sit on its urge to splash stupid lies over front pages about games and kids when the time arises. They, as much as short-sighted right wing politicians, are responsible for stirring up negative feelings in reporting only the sensationalist nonsense and lies which seems to sell much better than truth and objectivity. It also gives these Senators great support, albeit by default. Maybe we should suggest to the Senators that newspaper articles about violence could be the real cause of violence - let them get on the media's case!

** Peter Mackay spent 15 years working with kids and families in a variety of welfare organisations in Australia and the UK before joining the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) in 1990.*

In 1994, Peter became the Senior Classifier responsible for the implementation of computer games classification, and recently took up a position as Development Manager for The Core On-Line Games, a company setting up a new internet competition & game players web site.



VIDEO NASTIES

Here's a few games which offended the sensibilities of the OFLC. Do they bother you? It probably depends on how desensitised you've become from watching too much TV. Still, they're just games and you can stop playing whenever you want.

MORTAL KOMBAT OFLC RATING: MA15+ HIGH LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

More likely to cause tomato sauce fights than to inspire anyone to go out and rip someone's head off. Without the red blobs flying around few people would bother playing it, but because of them it's a jolly laugh. Bloody good fun!

RESIDENT EVIL OFLC RATING: MA15+ REALISTIC HORROR

Lots of blood and tension as you stalk through the zombie infested mansion, popping the heads of the undead like watermelons. This may sound horrible, but suits the cheesy B-grade theme of the game.

DOOM OFLC RATING: MA15+ HIGH LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

The object of this game is to survive. To do so, you must kill thousands of Hell-spawned beasts. You relate to them only as targets to aim at. But are people who play Doom any less likely to be shocked by tragic events in real life?

DIE HARD TRILOGY

OFLC RATING: MA15+ REALISTIC HORROR

Our mouths were agape the first time we saw the wipers come on to clear the windscreen of pedestrian juice, and we are not convinced of Bruce Willis' sincerity when he cries out "Sorry" after knee-capping an innocent bystander. Tasteless, perhaps, but hardly realistic.

RE-LOADED OFLC RATING: MA15+ MEDIUM LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

An average 'run around shooting things' game, distinguished only by the bloody remains left in your wake. Looks gory, but totally unrealistic and has little bearing on the actual gameplay.

LEGACY OF KAIN OFLC RATING: TBA (MA15+ WITHOUT A DOUBT!)

The plot is nothing short of cold blooded revenge and the game is full of indiscriminate slayings. Sounds nasty, but the gore soon becomes amusing, if for the wrong reasons (almost Python-esque). The cuts scenes are graphic, but nothing the average 10 year-old hasn't seen before. Still, this is one game which probably should be kept out of the reach of the younger kids.

DEAR PERSON WHO ANSWERS FEEDBACK

Firstly, I'd just like to say I love SquareSoft RPGs. After reading your Tobal No. 1 review I quickly bought it as soon as it was on the shelves and I just think it's excellent and fun to play, but I was a bit disappointed.

The characters have no real endings and considering that Square are the makers of the Final Fantasy series which are jam packed with thick plots, I was upset.

Tekken 2 gives you an idea about why the characters enter the tournament or relationships between characters. So I was thinking maybe if I get past all the dungeons I'd see proper endings and some type of ending for Snork, Mufu, Udan, but the ever-changing dungeon is a pain in the arse. Potions should stay the same so you know what they are. I get so far and a weak enemy kicks my butt. I hope that the nurse can make a general tip and players guide for Tobal No. 1.

Thanks for listening and I hope you can help (apart from the negatives I really love Tobal No. 1 and its playability).

P.S. I love Akira's character designs. If you have any drawn Tobal No. 1 characters, could you include them in your mag?

- Peter Conti

MEDDLING FEMALES

I really like the PlayStation that I got for Christmas. The only thing I don't like is that my mum doesn't like me playing it for too long. Man, I could sit there all day. And my sister always wants to play when I'm playing.

Should I: A) Just ignore her. B) Tell her to wait until I'm finished. C) Let her have a go?

- Joel Ryan,
Quakers Hill, NSW

Hmmm... A delicate situation. I suggest Plan B followed by Plan C. If that doesn't work, go to Plan A.

BORING OLD GIT

I have just recently purchased your second mag, it's great. I find the demo CD a good catch and puts the finishing touch on the mag.

I was a bit concerned though about how many people are quick to

bag Formula 1, I think it's great. Murray Walker isn't a boring old git and Need For Speed isn't more realistic than Formula 1.

Now I have a few questions I would like to ask.

1. I think memory cards are a rip-off. Why can't the console save things somewhere? Surely someone from Sony can invent something. Instead of using precious money on memory cards.

2. Why hasn't Sony made an AFL game yet? I know that if it was released it would sell thousands of copies. Instead of making games that would give someone the shits.

- Someone

1. There's no reason why Sony couldn't have built some sort of memory storage device into the PlayStation, but they didn't, probably to keep down the cost. 2. We've received heaps of letters asking about Australian sport games, but the commercial reality is that they'd have to sell tens of thousands to justify producing them. There's a rugby game on the way (Jonah Lomu Rugby from Codemasters) and we'll have news of cricket game in the next issue, but as far as AFL and League are concerned, don't hold your breath.

FAVOURITE FIGHTING FANATIC

Fantastic job on your book and thanks for including a demo disc. I'm a fighting game fanatic and my favourite is SF Alpha 2.

1. Will there be a 3D Earthworm Jim game? If so, when?

2. Could you put in more competitions, please?

3. Last of all, could you please put a poster in your book, please? I've even put in a picture.

Hope for the future

- Jye Mitchell

1. We haven't heard anything about another worm game, but Shiny's forthcoming Wild 9s looks like it will offer more of the company's unique brand of off-beat humour. 2. Are there enough comps in this issue? 3. So, you want a poster now, eh?

I HAVE AN OPINION

Good work on producing a fine Aussie PSX Magazine. I have an opinion to state though. While many readers may disagree strongly about this, I think two of the most crap companies are Acclaim and Capcom. I have owned many systems, from MegaDrive and SNES, to the PSX and these two companies have made crap games from day one.

Look at Acclaim. They never put time into their games and it shows. They are all scrolling beat 'em ups with little between them. Look at their games; Batman Forever, Judge Dredd, X-Men and Iron Man. They are all

rush jobs and it shows. The graphics are hopeless and the movement is hopeless too. Many people may think they made the NBA Jam's & MK's, but Midway made them.

Now for Capcom. They are Crap with a capital C. Their never ending Street Fighter saga bores me to tears, with Street Fighter 1, 2, 3, Turbo Super, Super Turbo, Championship Edition, Movie, Alpha, Zero, EX Alpha 2, to name a few. It would be alright if they were all new games, but they're all the same. I can't find much difference between Street Fighter II and Alpha 2.

Now for a question: Can you put Tobal No.1 on your next demo disk?

- Keiran Fwenny,
NSW

So then, you don't like Street Fighter? We know where you live. We'll send Blanka around to sort you out if you don't watch your step... 1. D'oh! It wasn't available.

SURFIE-STYLE

Bravo on creating a terrible magazine! Why is it terrible do I hear you ask? Because you haven't realised that you are writing to a young audience. Swearing your little butts off isn't really going to give you any more customers than usual! If parents have a read of their child's magazine, I don't think they will be conned into buying another one! Sure maybe it's fun writing trash, but will it help the readers? I don't think so! The world doesn't need another surfie-style magazine. Clean up your act!

- The Critic

THIS BORING WORLD

Hi and congratulations of a thousand PlayStations for the best mag on this boring world.

1. I have now played the N64 and could not find where at all they used the extra 32 bit. Do you reckon it will even put a dent in the PlayStation's reputation for the best graphics in town?

2. When will you be able to get a net connection for the PlayStation and if so how much will it cost?

3. I have heard rumours of MTV's Aeon Flux being made into a PlayStation game, have you?

4. Is it possible to get the sequel to that GREAT demo 1 CD that we got with our PlayStations?

5. Are any of these games coming to the PlayStation? If so, when for: Warcraft 1&2, MechWarrior 1&2 and Quake.

- XONE (Tribe O Enterprises)
Oaks Rd, TAS

1. Which machine has the best graphics is a personal opinion. I wouldn't lose any sleep worrying about it. 2. Not for a while. 3. Yes, we've heard the rumours of an Aeon Flux game and we got quite excited. Unfortunately, no one

seems to know anything about it so it remains a tantalizing rumour. (But imagine if it was like Tomb Raider, but faster and more responsive and with Aeon's cool weapons and all the cool things she can do! We can only hope.)

4. Sony send out demos like that one to all who send in their registration card. 5. No for Warcraft, yes for Mech 2 (but not the first one) and Quake, we have been told, is still in development.

THE SWEETEST THING

Your magazine is the sweetest thing on the news-stand at the moment and the demo discs are great, however, Tobal No.1 and MK Trilogy would be nice on your next demo. Now for a few questions.

1. Has Sony said anything about Crash Bandicoot 2?

2. Is it true that Sony worked with Nintendo to make a Nintendo CD but Nintendo ditched it so Sony made the PSX?

3. When Duke Nukem 3D comes out will it be unedited?

4. How come you thought Alpha 2 was better than MK Trilogy when SF Alpha 2's graphics are hopeless?

- Courtney Kissarne

1. Only every superlative they could come up with. It should be out by the end of the year, we'll see if it's any good then. 2. Something like that. 3. Expect the OFLC to impose the same censorship upon the PSX version as they did to the PC game. 4. More dissention! You're entitled to your opinion, but what's wrong with the graphics? Not enough blood? No polygons or motion capture?

HEH HEH! HE SAID "ASS-ESS"

Purchased your first edition of PlayStation magazine, read it, found it on the whole to be informative and relatively accurate. Maybe and please accept my criticism in a positive manner. In your first edition a survey could have been compiled to assess who owns a PlayStation, and what games they have and games they would like to have created. Speaking from my own point of view, I'm 47, have Doom (10), RR (7), RRR (8), AT (6), F1 (9), TNFS (9.5), I still own a Sega MegaDrive and play on it PGA Tour II. Is Sony contemplating the introduction of golf? I find the golf is a great game in either single or two player mode. Well that's it ED, take it on the chin and look forward to the next.

- A.M.
Moranbah, Qld

If you're after a golf game we suggest you investigate Sony's Actua Golf.

GETS BETTER AND BETTER

Congratulations on your new mag! I bought the first issue before I

Send all correspondence to:
Feedback
Playstation Magazine
PO Box 634
Strawberry Hills
NSW 2010

E-mail:
Playstation@next.com.au

even had a PlayStation (I knew I'd get a PlayStation so I bought the mag anyway).

I've also bought your second issue and it seems that your mag gets better and better, though I didn't write to tell you how good you are (you should know that). I wrote to ask some quick questions, so could you please answer them.

1. What will Independence Day (the game) be about? Will it be a shoot 'em up like Starwing on SNES?

2. Could you please include a demo of Iron & Blood in you next issue (playable). I ask this because our rental shop doesn't have it and I would like to sample it, if not could you tell me if it is good or not?

3. As each issue comes out, will you include more demos on the CD?

Keep up the brilliant work.

- T Krstic.

1. Independence Day will be a shooter, but I wouldn't compare it with Starwing. 2. It's a really, really bad beat 'em up. Don't waste your life! 3. Our demo CDs are produced in Europe and we don't have as much control over their content as we'd like. This may change in the future, however.

FISH EMULSION

I know you probably have a lot of people congratulating you on your mag but I'm just one more person, it's great and I love the demo's.

I just wrote to ask you a few questions.

1. Is there going to be any fishing games on Sony in the future like Bass Fishing on SNES?

2. There's two games that I like and want to get; NFL Gameday and International Moto X. Which one would you recommend?

3. Can you please put a big poster of Resident Evil or Porsche Challenge? Please? Thanks.

- Scott Sinclair
Thorneside, QLD

1. I sincerely hope not. 2. If you're after a gridiron game get Madden '97. International Moto X isn't too bad. 3. See that Phil, they want posters!

CRY BABY

I recently bought a PlayStation. I was so excited to play it when all of a sudden my friend rings up and says he read in a pommy mag that PlayStation discs jump, skip FMVs and don't load games. I threw myself on the floor and started to cry. I switched on my PlayStation begging it to work, when it totally stuffed up. I tried ringing Sony but just my luck - they were busy. I'm really pissed OFF!!!

Will Sony be doing anything about this? Do your PlayStations muck up? I read that putting it upside-down while playing, stops

these stuff-ups. Is this true? Will Sony exchange my PSX for another?

- Mark,
NSW

Settle down! Yes, PlayStations are prone to 'skipping' on FMV sequences, but this is often the result of dust build up or over heating (you haven't got it sitting on thick carpet, have you?). It can also be due to dust or hairs on the CD or PlayStation lens. Blow across

them (no spit!) before use, but NEVER wipe on your sleeve! This leaves tiny scratches that you can't see and these fill with dust. If problems persist, contact Sony or the shop you bought it from.

FANCY FANCY

When I got my mag I read it cover to cover. Then I read my Hyper and then my PC Powerplay. Fancy fancy, same publisher (Phillip Keir) and others like Mark Gowing, Steve Watson, Julie-

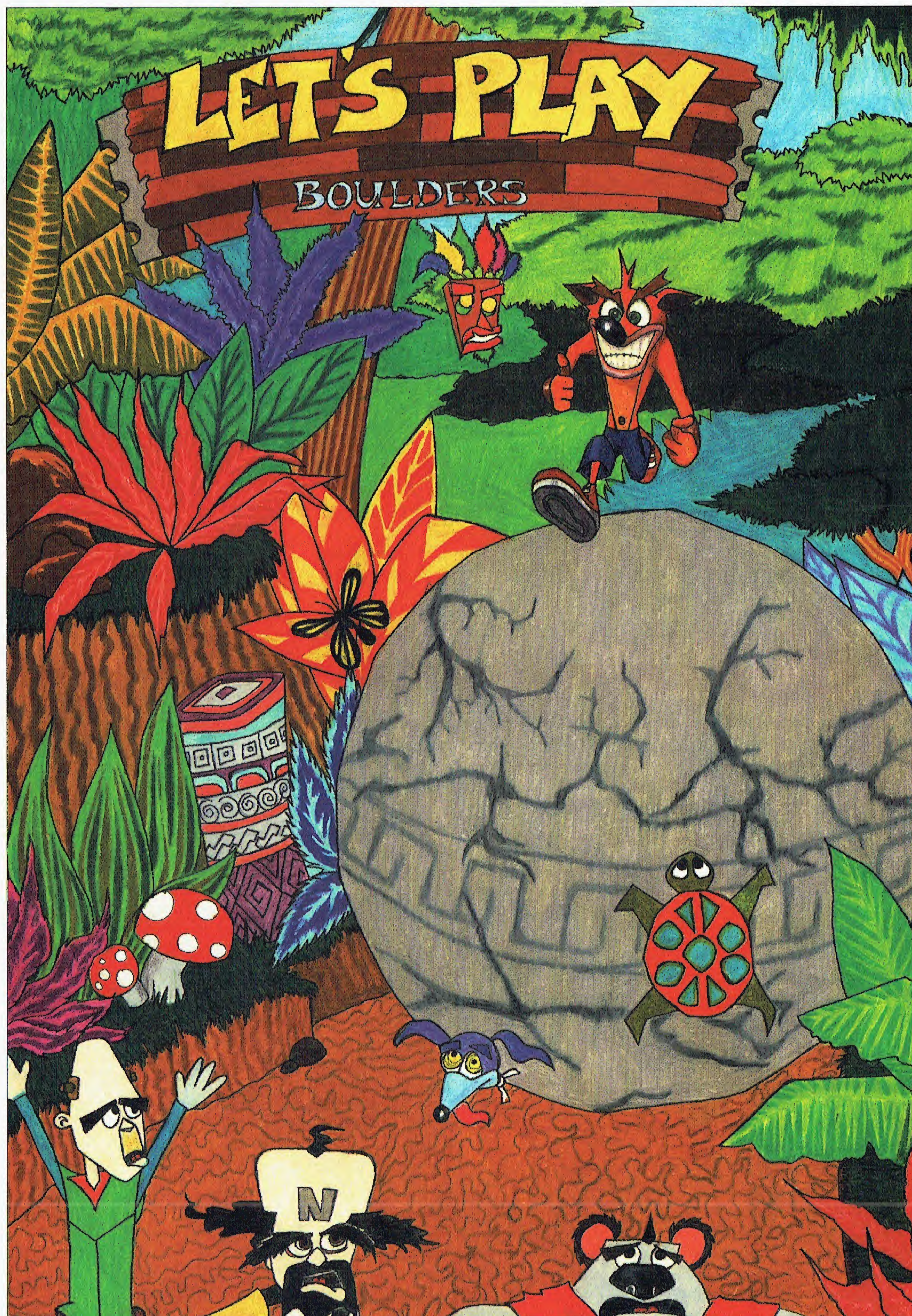
Ann Kwok, Emma Beck, March Stepnik, Paul Cox, Dan Toose and the one and only Stretch Armstrong.

PS. Sorry about the abuse, but I thought people should know.

- The Enforcer,
The Cyborg System, Mars

WRAPPED IN PLASTIC

As a sports game nut, I am wondering whether or not they are going to bring out a Cricket game for



Rosemarie Timms won the Crash comp with this extremely cool pic. It was one of few entries that didn't involve obscene bodily functions.

PlayStation. Also, I would like to know if I'm the only person in the world who has trouble taking the plastic wrapper off the games when I buy them?

- Michael Burrows
VIC

Special report on Beam Software's new PlayStation cricket game next issue. And no, you're not the only one.

DOES YOUR MOTHER KNOW I'M HERE?

Will Transport Tycoon be hitting the PlayStation or has it already?

Secondly, is Grand Prix 2 available on the PlayStation because having played it on my PC I can only imagine how much it would be improved.

And last but not least, are there any train sims in the works for the PlayStation that you only play when your parents aren't home?

Waiting to score your next issue.

- The Yankee,
Bendigo, VIC

Later in the year. No, but Formula 1 is pretty damn good (and far more accessible). A.I.V Evolution Global might interest you, but there's nothing in it you'd want to hide from your parents. Unless they're particularly strict about playing games which encourage rampant capitalism and greed.

BANDICOOT SUCKS

I'm not going to suck up just yet, as I wish to complain. In Command & Conquer you (like Hyper) said you couldn't make teams, but you can.

OK, now I'll suck. Quite a good magazine, love the demo CDs. I'm sure your heads are big enough from the other people sucking up so I'll stop.

Now to answer a question other people have asked. If music or FMV sequences skip, check the disc, move it around in the light to see any tiny scratches. There are two ways to make them play properly without spending more money.

1. Blow on the disc, no spit. I don't know how it works, but it does sometimes.

2. Turn the PlayStation upside down(?).

After playing Tekken 2 and Tobal No.1 my heart still belongs to Tekken 2. (My opinion anyway). Crash Bandicoot sucks big time.

May gaming live forever!

- PSX Expert,
Perth, WA

When confronted with this, George protested ignorance. "But the version you gave me didn't have an instruction booklet!", he cried. As penance, George is now doing time as deputy editor of Hyper, where he has to play crappy Sega games all day.

Bizarre as it might sound, turning the PlayStation upside down or on its side actually can

help, but be very careful and don't do it when the power is on and the disc is spinning.

GAMES ARE ABOUT FUN

The first two mags were excellent with lots of reviews and wicked demo CDs although, I didn't much like Formula 1, it was too serious for me.

Most of your reviews were spot on except... I think Destruction Derby 2 should have scored a 9. It's a giant leap forward over the original in terms of graphics and gameplay. And what was wrong with MK Trilogy? It looked pretty good to me. MK3 scored highly in most mags and Trilogy looks much better. Are you just sick of Mortal Kombat?

Why is the technology of games continually improved? As soon as the latest whiz-bang console is released we get news of a better one and so on. I think games are about fun not graphics. I had more fun on the old Master System without worrying that my new machine will be out of date in a month.

Now for a few questions (surprise!)

1) Any news of the PSX Internet hook-up?

2) Are Sony planning any PSX upgrade to compete with the N64?

3) What is your opinion of Wing Commander 3? Are any more WC games coming out on PlayStation?

4) When are Quake or Duke 3D coming out?

- J Peterson,
Balmoral, NSW

Yes, we're sick of Mortal Kombat. Obviously a lot of people aren't, but there's no accounting for taste. 1. Nyet 2. Nein 3. WC3 didn't really do anything for us (too much production, not enough game), but Wing Commander IV should be out now and is better. 4. Er, later dude.

ACHTUNG!

Hail the great people who make the great magazine. Congratulations are definitely in order on your second instalment of this fine piece of literature. Which, by the way, is just an extension of greatness carried over from your first issue. But...

I have had my PlayStation for a fair while now, there was a period after I bought it where the Australian magazine scene was clinically dead when it came to PlayStation. During this time I skimmed other magazines (because yours is the only one I read). Anyway, one day while "skimming" I came across a letter from someone who was talking about getting V.I.P demo discs from Sony, just by sending in their PlayStation registration card. I was just wondering whether I have got my wires crossed and if they do exist, do any Australians, or have any Australians received any that you know of?

This question concerns Destruction Derby 2. Are there really four secret tracks on it? If you go to the CD player section of the game and toggle through the songs, the last four are labelled as Secret track 1, 2, 3 and 4. Now at first I thought "Well it's just four secret tracks of music. But after clubbing myself about the head several times I woke up and realised that music is no good of there's nowhere to play it. I would really appreciate it if you could clarify this for me.

Lastly, if I were a magazine character, would Miss Nurse run off with me so that we might publish beautiful mini-novels together?

Anyway, that's about it for now, but once again, well done people and congratulations on your quality product.

- Richard Dennis

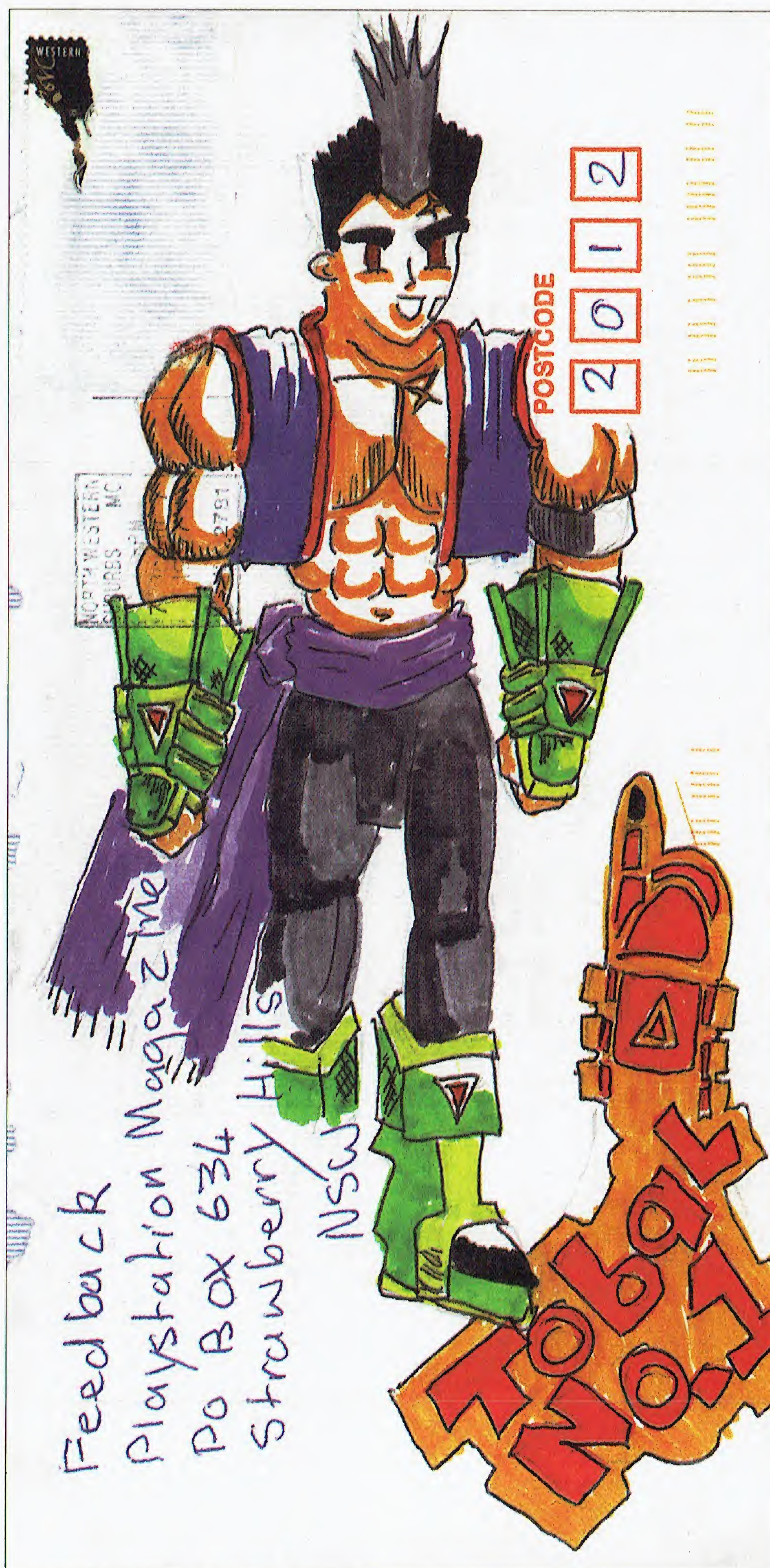
Yes, PlayStation owners who send in the registration card are blessed with the odd demo compilation from Sony.

By golly, you could be on to something!

It would depend on which character you were.

CHIP HEAD

I think you guys are doing a great job on assessing PlayStation



Cool Tobal envelope art from Peter Conti. Send more now!

MISSED AN ISSUE? NO PROBLEM.

Back issues are available for only \$12.00 each (including postage and handling). But hurry, stocks are limited! New Zealand readers please pay AUD\$13.00 per issue. Issue One: Formula 1, Tekken 2, Crash Bandicoot and more. Issue Two: Tobal #1, Wipeout 2097, Tomb Raider, Destruction Derby 2, Capcom Feature.



PlayStation BACK ISSUES

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S.A
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games. However, I do have some technical questions myself.

Being a little bit of a chip head (I'm a programmer), can you give me some more information about the Yarouze Development kit and its release in Australia?

It's really good to hear that there are many other adults out there that love their PSX machines and games. I am copping a lot of flak from work, friends etc about my weekends spent playing video games. I'm in my late 20s by the way.

Thanks, - **Garvin Lee**

It requires basic knowledge of C++, but apparently it's quite easy to program simple games with the Black PlayStation. Those who are seriously interested should get in touch with Sony via the Yarouze web site. www.scee.sony.co.uk

CONFUSED

Issue 2 of your magazine was the best. I am finally glad to have an excellent Australian Playstation magazine to read. I loved Porsche Challenge and Micro Machines V3. I have some simple questions to ask and would love some answers.

1. Do you know when Porsche Challenge is coming to the stores in Australia?

2. Is that the completed version of Porsche?

3. I'm not sure if I like the N64 as much as my PlayStation, but is the N64 better and worth buying? I'm confused. Should I by an N64, or just keep buying lots of games for the PlayStation? I don't know which machine will last the longest and give the best performance.

4. An awful lot of computer store owners have been telling me that if you have a Pentium 166mhz with 32meg of ram it will run as well as the PlayStation. I do not believe this. If it is not true can you print the answer in another issue, so I can return to their store and shove it in their faces.

Thanks for the best magazine in the world.

- **Someone,**
somewhere in cyberspace

1. Should be out now. 2. The demo of Porsche Challenge on last issue's cover CD was far from completed and was intended to give you an idea of what sort of game it will be. The finished version is faster, smoother and has more detailed graphics. 3. You should be more concerned about playing games now rather than what may happen in the future. Anything to do with computers will become out-dated sooner or later, but that doesn't mean it's no longer any good or the games will be any less enjoyable to play. 4. It's pointless to compare

the PlayStation against PCs. There are many things that each can do which the other can't. MechWarrior 2 is better on the PlayStation, yet Command & Conquer, a less graphically intense game, pales in comparison next to the original. A lot of it has to do with how much effort the programmers put into the development.

SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

If you don't mind my saying so, the Australian Playstation Mag rules. It is easily the equal of other Aussie games mags (yes, even Hyper) and it rules the roost as far as Playstation publications go. I have just finished reading your second issue, and once again I was impressed by the sheer quantity of reviews you managed to include. I bought Formula 1, Crash Bandicoot, Die Hard Trilogy and Need For Speed based on your good reviews and insights. One thing I noticed while reading was how many times the bottoms of articles were cut off, especially in the Pre Play section. Anyway, I had a couple of questions to ask.

1) Do LucasArts have any intention of releasing X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter On Playstation?

2) Is Sony going to release a PSX II in the near future? After spending nigh on \$1200 on my PSX and games, I would be a little pissed if the new machine was a stand alone, rather than an add-on.

3) How does someone get involved in the world of video games, employment wise? Whether it be as a games reviewer (like yourselves) or working at a production house making games. I have some great ideas for games (I'm sure everyone does) and I would love to work in this field.

4) How about a competition where readers send in there own ideas for games?

Thanks for your time.

PS. The demo CD on issue 2 was great! Porsche Challenge looks like it could be my next purchase (after Tobal No.1).

- **Matt,**
Gosford, NSW

The abrupt ending of some articles did not go unnoticed. Art Droids were spoken to and have promised that it won't happen again. 1. No word as yet, but if it does happen it won't be for a while. 2. It's a few years off and unlikely to be an add-on, but hopefully it will be backwardly compatible so you can play all your old games. 3. If you are interested and persistent enough, you'll be able to achieve your goals. Getting in contact with game companies is the first step - if they don't know you exist, they're not going to employ you. 4. We welcome suggestions for

games from readers and some of these are quite good. Sometimes we get pages and pages of blue prints for character and level designs and these can be rather scary, but your enthusiasm is a good sign.

GREETINGS FROM DEVIL

First up, love the mag. Now to business. Tobal No.1 vs Tekken 2.

Tekken 2 - what's wrong with it?

- No quest mode. It would be different with one, especially the link

replays and sometimes while you're playing it. So that's another bad mark against Tobal No.1. The PAL version of Tekken 2 is the same as the Jap copy - no slow down or glitches. Well, not as bad as Tobal No.1.

YOUR SOUL IS MINE.....!?

- **DEVIL'97**

PUT HIS BIT IN

Firstly, congratulations on a great magazine. I will gladly fork out the cash for a demo disc. I'd fork out even more if you added an



Derek Cardew is responsible for this gratuitous pic. But who's driving the bus?

combos like Nina, Bruce or King's.

Tobal No.1 - what's wrong with it?

- One player vs second player - not enough space to move in, always fall off the edge if you are not careful.

- In one player mode, do a combo and the computer player is almost over the edge do two and a bit, they're over.

- Jumping is hard to get used to.

- In practice mode, your practice dummy goes over the edge, so you can't really practice.

- The endings. Tekken 2's are longer, more in them and better done.

I like the quest mode, I've finished quests 1, 2, 3 and dungeon quest, but they're not easy.

TOBAL IS GOOD

I recently purchased Tobal No.1 and I would just like to say that it is a really good game, it is worth its money. Owning both games, I think that Tobal No.1 is a better game than Tekken 2. Well, that is all I have to say and that your magazine is the best magazine ever made.

- **George Samios**

GREETINGS AGAIN FROM DEVIL

I have just had look at the PAL version of Tobal No.1 and let me tell you, boy is it slow. It glitches in the

anime section and an international releases section.

Secondly, I want to put in my bit for the Tobal No.1 vs Tekken 2 debate. The big difference between the games is that Tobal No.1 is a 3D game in a 3D environment. In other words, there is complete freedom of movement. Tekken 2 is also in a 3D environment, but the characters move within a 2D plane - hence the limited scope for strategy. Any person who has taken self-defence classes can tell you that fighting is not about beating up the other person as fast as you can: it's about avoiding an attack to expose weakness. So even though Tekken 2 might be flashier, Tobal No.1 beats it with sheer intelligence.

Finally, I heard that US copies of Tobal No.1 included a demo of Final Fantasy VII - which we sadly don't get here. Is there a chance you'll include it in your demo disc? And when will FFVII be released in Australia?

- **Kevin Cheung**
Narwee, NSW.

Final Fantasy VII is not due out until the end of the year. See our preview for more information on this brilliant game. We've been playing the Japanese version and we love it, even though we aren't quite sure what's going on.



HYPER»

SEE HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES

» NEW ISSUE ON SALE NOW

Tobal No. 1

The more we play it, the more we find ourselves enjoying Tobal No. 1. Amos & Andy take a look at the combat method and offer a few insights on getting the most out of it.

The hardest aspect to get used to with *Tobal No. 1* is undeniably the control method. Since the characters have total freedom of movement on a 3D plane and require all the buttons on the direction pad just to move around, the jumping has been assigned to a shoulder button. If you're used to playing the majority of other fighting games, this gets very confusing as you always want to hit the 'up' direction to jump over your opponents. In *Tobal* your jumps won't send you flying over them, so unlearn your *Tekken 2* or *Street Fighter* tactics. It's not a quick escape and is only really useful for avoiding opponent's low attacks (and for leaping from one platform to another in the Quest Mode of course).

During combat it's important to keep moving around, just like boxers do during a bout. The idea is to constantly change direction so you don't face your opponent head on, for if he or she is executing an attack at that moment, there's a good chance you would have dodged it. This also leaves them wide open, so it's crucial that you attack while they're vulnerable. Generally a foot sweep will connect almost without fail due to the wide area they cover; in fact the foot-sweep-from-the-side is a very handy move to get out of tricky situations. While your foe is momentarily off balance, you can quickly add a few more attacks which will hopefully floor them or move you to a more advantageous position. The same old fighting game rule to alternate the areas you attack also applies to *Tobal* as well. If they block your high attack, switch to a low one and vice versa.

Even if you manage to weave your way out of most of the incoming blows, some will undoubtedly get through, so as soon as you're hit, be prepared for a follow up and block accordingly. Some attacks are easier to anticipate than others, but if you block you've at least got a chance of avoiding another hit! Of course, you can always initiate a grab if you're close to them and follow it up with a throw. Generally, it's better to wait till they grab you, as it gives you the opportunity to either break their hold or turn the situation to your advantage and throw them instead.

So the combos aren't as flashy or outrageous as *Tekken 2*. The good news is that the more expertise you gain in chaining moves together, the

more real the fights look. I'm not talking about 'kung-fu movie realism' (which *Tekken* excels at), but the realism of a martial arts match. Your freedom of movement enables you to manoeuvre behind your opponent and trip them up or attack from a different angle. Watch your distance, go in for a few hits, back off and play defence, then lay into them again from another angle. Don't simply beat opponents in a head-on combo-fest, as you'll be missing out on all the nuances to fighting *Tobal* has to offer!

ATTITUDE, SOFTEN, MOVE

Many players get into trouble because they try to do too many special moves without bothering to soften up their opponent. Here's a run-down on some basic tactics and how best to employ them during battle. We'll use Chuji as an example, as he is probably the most well-rounded combatant and mastering his moves opens the way for a greater understanding of the other fighters.

Easy combos

The easiest moves to get out for any of the fighters are the standing two or three hit combos. The secret to getting out effective combos is speed. You've got to press the sequence of buttons very quickly and accurately, making sure you don't double-press on the first or second strike. If you see the opponent block the second hit, you usually have time to stop before your third hit gets blocked and they grab or counter attack. Another thing to watch out for when you're fighting the computer is if you miss and try the same combo again, your opponent is more likely to see it coming and take appropriate measures against you which result in your fighter ending up on his bottom or worse, being thrown.

High, high, high

This easy combo gives you two quick punches and a roundhouse kick. It's a good all-purpose combo and is especially effective against opponents who try to fight their way out of your attack rather than trying to block it.

High, high, medium

Again, this one starts with two quick punches to the head, but the third hit of this combo is particularly devastating. It's a hefty punch to the gut which sends your opponent flying a third of the way across the



If you can manoeuvre behind your opponent they don't stand a chance!



The standing drop kick (forward, forward + medium) can help you win by ring-out.



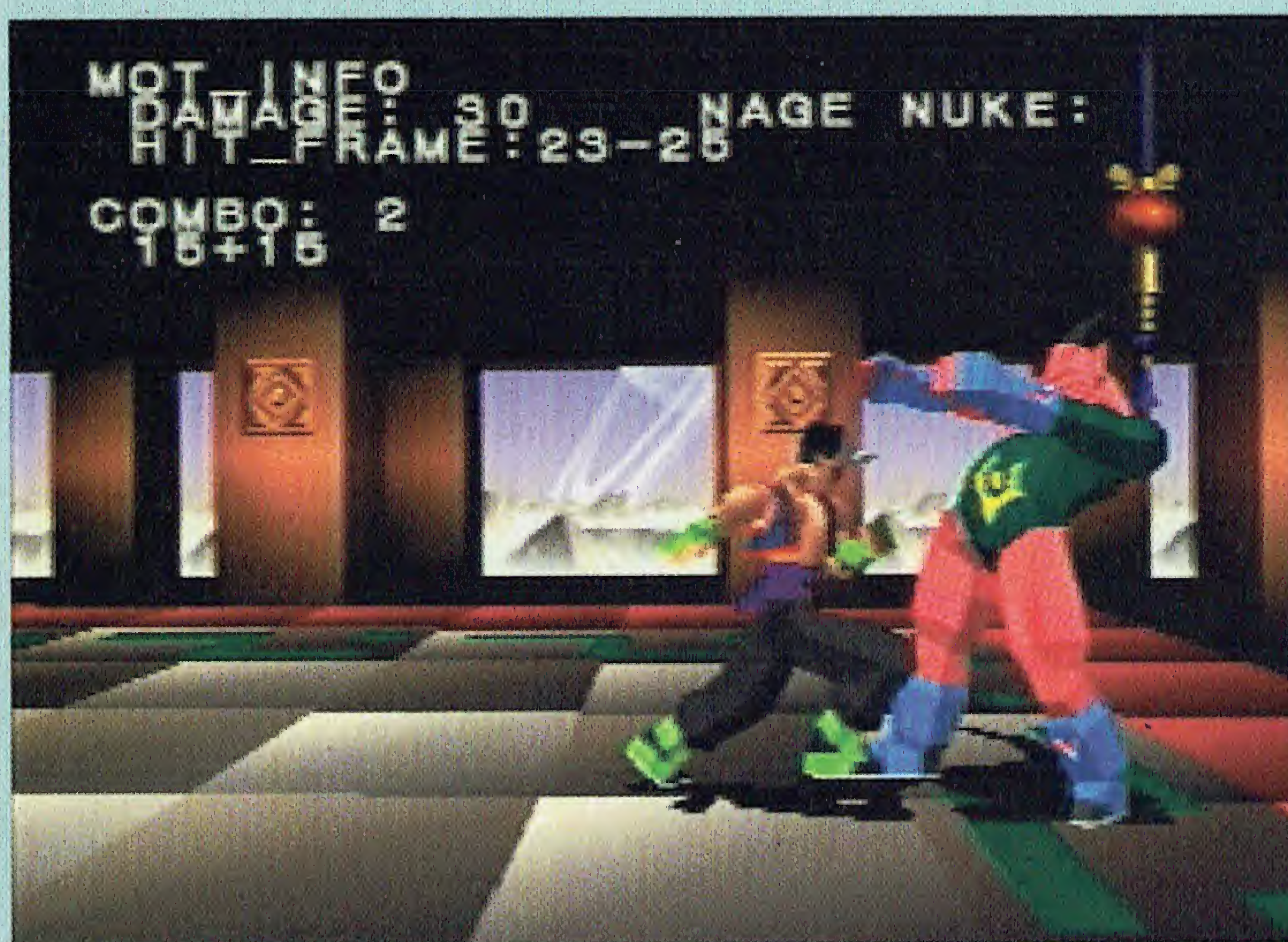
The backflip (forward, back + medium) catches opponents off-guard when they attack high.



Grabbing your opponent from the side offers a range of different throws and locks.



Time the sliding attack correctly and you can knock down foes as they're getting up.



After stunning him with a few quick jabs, Chuji prepares to gut-punch Ill into oblivion.



This nasty heel drop is especially useful against foes who've already been knocked down.

ring. Particularly useful if you're trying to get a ring out victory.

High, high, low

Same as above, but the third strike is a low kick to the side of your foe's leg which tends to throw them off balance rather than knocking them over.

High, medium, low

A bit harder to get out, if only because you've got to tag the medium hit very quickly after the first punch. Get it right and Chuji goes straight into a roundhouse kick after the first punch, then finishes with a spinning sweep that takes out his opponent's legs, sending them over. Quick opponents will often manage to block the third hit, and if you discontinue after the second hit you'll be left open for a split second, so only use this combo when you're confident of getting all strikes in.

High, low

A good quick combo for knocking opponents off balance. The low sweep of this combo is quicker than the usual low sweep, being more of a twisting flick, so your foe may not see it coming or have time to avoid it.

THE BLOCK BUTTON

Gone are the days when you only had to pull back to effectively block all attacks. With the freedom offered by *Tobal's* true 3D gameplay, an extra button is needed to perform this life-saving function. But blocking is only one of the things it does. When used with the medium hit (square button) your character will attempt to grab the opponent. Press down while holding the block button and your fighter will squat down to duck under high or jumping attacks. Holding block and pressing high (triangle) makes Chuji do a double head kick and pressing high or low while squatting results in other interesting kicks. Generally, it is a good idea to be ready to press block whenever you aren't moving or attacking.

JUMPING

A lot of players neglect the jump button due to its unfamiliarity and placement as one of the shoulder buttons. However, the jumping in *Tobal* has an entirely different effect than in other fighting games currently available. It's more useful as a way of getting out of situations than for attacking, but it serves this purpose quite well when used at the right time. Jump toward your opponent and press any of the three attack buttons to deliver a knock-down kick. If you've just felled your foe and they're lying on the ground, jump toward them while pressing low attack simultaneously and your fighter flips forward to land an extended leg onto whichever part of

their anatomy is exposed. You have to be careful when timing this, as too soon or too late and your prone opponent may well get up before you connect, leaving you to land flat on your back and vulnerable to whatever form of punishment they choose to inflict upon you for being so careless!

RUNNING

Running is performed by tapping twice in the direction you're facing and holding the pad in that direction on the second tap. Like the jump, running is something many players don't bother with. Its use in bouts is infrequent, but it can have a thoroughly destabilising effect upon your opponents when you get the timing right. The most important thing to remember when you're planning on running is getting the distance right. There's no point in trying to run when you're close, but you should consider it on those occasions when the two fighters become separated by more than a couple of body lengths, such as following throws or when special attacks miss.

There are three main attacks you can use with a run. A high or medium attack results in a powerful jumping roundhouse to the head or chest which can send your opponent flying. Secondly, a low attack results in your fighter dropping down into a slide that knocks your foe's legs out beneath them. Lastly, you can surprise your opponent by jumping and kicking just as you reach them.

Note: If you choose to do the sliding attack with Chuji, you can immediately follow it up with that break dance move of his (forward then back + X) to score another hit as your opponent hits the floor. This combo looks especially cool.

QUEST MODE

Unfortunately, there's no easy way to get through the Quest Mode levels. Perseverance plays a big part, especially in Udan's ever-changing dungeon. As far as fighting is concerned, don't muck around! Most of the enemies you encounter are quite easy to dispatch, with the exception of the last boss on each level. When you see them in their 'dormant flame' appearance, simply line yourself up directly facing them and run. As soon as you reach them they'll change into a fighter; if you time your attacks right, you'll land a few good ones before they have a chance to react and victory is virtually assured.

Health bonuses are usually indicated when you pick them up, but some things like the dynamite potion remain a mystery until consumed or used on an enemy. A wise insurance policy is to put good things in a jar and save them for when you really need them.

Wipeout 2097 - The

How fast are you going now? Our resident Wipeout champ, Malcolm Campbell, the man who reels off perfect laps in his sleep, offers a few words of advice to lesser mortals...

ARE YOU UP TO IT?

Wipeout 2097 is the ultimate racing game as far as many gamers are concerned. It just gets better the more you play it. But how the devil do you beat the Phantom tracks?

One of the main differences between the original *Wipeout* and *Wipeout 2097* is the increase in speed. While 2097 may seem slower at first, the difference becomes obvious about two seconds into a race on the Phantom tracks. To unlock these two tracks the Rapier Challenge must be won by finishing first on every track at Rapier class in Challenge mode. Caution: using cheat codes to get Phantom class deprives you of much needed racing experience, and entering Phantom without it is sort of like entering the Monaco Grand Prix the day after you get your learner's permit.

This guide will hopefully give a basic rundown of the two Phantom tracks and how to shave those few vital seconds off your time. But, as the white-bearded wise old man sitting on a mountain said:

"Only by constant practice will you achieve a Gold medal on the Phantom tracks in Wipeout 2097."

THE AG CRAFT

The Phantom tracks are very unforgiving, and while it may have been fun to cruise around the Rapier tracks in the fast Qirex craft, it becomes a lot harder in the Phantom to grind the corners with any degree of control. The AG Systems craft is a good starting point, combining quick acceleration with good handling, and you'll probably not want to go any faster than the Auricom until you're really good.

Pick-ups

While it is important to make use of all the pick-ups at slower speeds, in Phantom it is more important to watch where you're going than to be blasting the guy in front to oblivion. Autopilots are the most valuable pick-up, but it's usually best to disengage them before the timer runs out as they have an annoying tendency of dropping your craft into a wall. The

Quake Disruptor and Thunder Bomb are best discarded - they can obscure vision for a short time, which usually results in a high speed collision. The Plasma Bolt is best used like the shotgun in *Doom* - up close and personal, for a sure kill. Fluke shots are more likely to find a target than taking the time to aim in Phantom, so Mines, Rockets, Missiles and Electro Bolts can be activated and deployed straight away. Use the Turbo Boost sparingly, if at all, and make sure it's on a long straight.

Pit stops and Energy

While racing in earlier and slower classes, it wasn't too hard to drop into the pit lane to replenish your craft's vital stores of energy. The pit lanes in the Phantom tracks are a lot more difficult to cruise in and out of without problems, mainly due to the speed you are travelling, but also because of the seemingly sharper entry and exit corners that are off the best racing line. It is easier and quicker to bypass the pit lanes and rely solely on the E-Paks, which seem to pop up more regularly when your craft is about to explode. Of course, having an auto pilot makes pitting a breeze.

THE PHANTOM TRACKS

Vostok Island

Vostok is full of bumps and short straights followed by sharp corners, requiring a lot of deft brake manoeuvring.

From the starting grid, fly straight then brake hard right into the first corner, which is deceptively tricky as you usually have a lot of speed built up from the straight. Make an early decision (left or right) for the upcoming fork in the track and start heading that way before the other racers cut you off. Pull back on the joypad to glide gently over the bumps and try to pick up a weapon to fire into the intersection.

At the stone gargoyles, pull back to pop the tail of your craft over the bumps on the other side and remain airborne for a while. Hitting a Turbo boost just before launching here will get you to the next intersection - great fun if you can stay in control! At the intersection, medium-brake left and hit the three acceleration squares for a boost up the hill. At the top, hard-brake right, while holding forward on the joypad to keep the nose down, as the walls on this corner curve in and are easy to collide with if airborne. The tunnel with the fairy lights has a



Phantom Tracks



nasty right-hander in it - hard-brake right and follow the light trails out into the DANGER tunnel. The sign is there for a reason - don't fall off the edges! Point the craft right off the top of the first bump, then cruise the rest of the tunnel making slight corrections with the air brakes to maintain a good line. The following sweeping right hander is a good place for weapon and speed pick-ups. Off the big jump, pull back on the joystick for a softer landing then go flat out round the long easy left past the pits.

The last tunnel takes a lot of practice to get right and an autopilot won't get you through all three corners, so use it just before the second and deactivate once in the straight. Doing it manually; the first corner is a standard hard-brake right. The second is deceptive and you need to hard-brake right a little later than normal. From there hit the three blue squares then immediately throw a hard-brake left and slide into the third corner, trying to run over the weapon squares on the finishing straight. Now just repeat another four times with minimal collisions and you might be in with a chance of winning.

Spilskinanke

This track is the hardest of all to master; it's fast as hell with a lot of traps to put you off the course or into a wall. Make sure you stay away from the walls when dropping off, or you're likely to be dragged out into space. Go full speed and rely on your reflexes (and skill, of course). Starting on the longest straight of the track, beware the sharp right-hander

at the top. Drifting out on this corner will cause the craft to go off the track, which is worse than a collision. A downhill straight to sharp left (say hello to the Luck-Ee cat) is next, so try to hit the three blue squares on the right then brake soon after. Up the small hill and hard-brake right, remembering to point the nose down. The pit straight is deadly, especially at the exit, so it is best to steer very quickly and not use any brakes. The scary dark tunnel following the pits has a straight then a medium-brake right to the top of the jump. Just before launching off, tap the right brake to turn yourself parallel with the drop-off level. Repeat this for the next drop-off to the left.

Now comes the hardest part of the track. The straight has three blue squares on the left, but miss these if you are going full speed. Only use them after a crash to pick up speed. Into the scary, dark, doomy tunnel where again it's best to miss the first two blue squares. Try to cut across the last one and run over the weapon square near the exit. More tricky cornering after this. Aim for the acceleration squares then, when crossing them, hard-brake in the direction of the corner.

Hammer along the straight towards the 90° drop-off, braking hard right and sliding off rally-style to the next level. Pretty basic from here; a small tunnel with a sharp right then left, jumping into the finishing straight and the only safe place on the track to use a turbo. If all has gone well over the five laps, you just might be able to catch and pass the race leader on the finishing line. Good luck!



WRITE TO MISS NURSE

She will give you a kiss to make things better.

HELPSTATION

Playstation Magazine

PO Box 634

Strawberry Hills

NSW 2012

DARK FORCES

Level Select

Restore Game and enter the following code: P3NDLDQNY2. Select Start Game and you can then choose from any level.

Cheat Menu

Press left, O, X, right, O, X, down, O, X during the game to access the cheat menu. The following options are made available:

INVINCIBLE: Have a guess.

COORDS: map coordinates are shown

SUPERMAP: shows full map

POGO: a cross between the no clip mode of Doom and a superjump - perfect for getting to those hard to reach areas.

MAXOUT: all weapons and equipment

GAME WON: toggle this option on, then bring up the pause screen during play. Select next mission to progress!

SIM CITY 2000

For one million dollars (we wish it was as easy in real life!), start or load a city. Access City Info/Budget. From this screen

- Hold R1 and press X, O, Δ, □ and let go of R1

- Hold L1 and press X, O, Δ, □ and let go of L1

- Hold R2 and press X, O, Δ, □ and let go of R2

- Hold L2 and press X, □, Δ, O and let go of L2

If you've done it correctly you'll hear a cheer and be one million dollars richer.

TRIPLE PLAY '97

Humongous Home Runs

To hit a monster of a home run, press and hold R1, R2, L1 and L2. Then press up, up, Δ, Δ, up, up, X, X. A chime will sound. Then, to hit a homer, all you have to do is make contact with the ball! For each new batter, you must re-enter this code.

TOMB RAIDER

Level Skip

Enter these codes at the inventory screen (relevant to which control system you chose)

Default: L2, R2, T, L1, L1, O, R2, L2

Type 2: L2, R2, O, T, T, L1, R2, L2

Type 3: L2, R2, R1, T, T, L1, R2, L2

Maximum Weapons

Enter this code at the inventory screen for full weapons and ammo (Lara will sigh if done correctly) - L1, T, L2, R2, R2, L2, O, L1

TOBAL NO. 1

This is an interesting code. To get HOM to reach behind himself and turn the power off, hit R1, L1 and Down during a match. What happens? You die and lose the match!

PANDEMONIUM

Level Passwords

Level 1: ADEAMIIE

Level 2: EPIJAKCA

Level 3: FBIJACKI

Level 4: KOCCIEE

Level 5: NGIAIBJJ

Level 6: NIIAJBCB

Level 7: KGCACICI

Level 8: AHICBAJE

Level 9: AIICFAJG

Level 10: AIICBAJI

Level 11: FBIIAKCK

Level 12: FDIIAKDC

Level 13: FFIIAKDK

Level 14: KACACIBA

Level 15: ADMCFACD

Level 16: EMIIKBE

Level 17: OEIBIBMJ

Level 18: FFAIAKCE

SOVIET STRIKE

Level Passwords

Campaign 1: WORSTCASE

Campaign 2: GRANDTHEFT

Campaign 3: GROZNEY

Campaign 4: CHERNOBYL

Campaign 5: CIVILWAR

Infinite Lives

At the password screen enter Elvis Lives and press X. A gunshot will sound if you've done it correctly.

POWER MOVE PRO WRESTLING

Secret Characters

All these are done from the title screen. To return to original characters, press Select again.

Sparrow: O, Right, Δ, Up, □, Left, X, Down, X, Square, Left, T, Up, O, Right, then Select. When selecting your player or opponent, press Select while Commandant is highlighted and Sparrow will appear in his place.

Gorgan (The Announcer): L1, L1, L2, R2, R2, R1, T, Down, X, Up, and Select. At the player/opponent screen press Select whilst over Orange and Gorgan will appear.

Saille (The Referee): Up, Down, Left, Right, Δ, X, □, O, L1, R1, L2, R2 and Select. Press select whilst El Temblor is highlighted and Saille will come up in his place.

BLAST CHAMBER

Infinite Lives

From the main menu screen, enter □, Left, □, Right, O, Down, O, Up. Choose Sole Survivor mode then start the game.





PC PowerPlay

GAMES ARE EVERYTHING.

Entirely, absolutely and without doubt, games are more important than food, school or work.

Sure, you can go about your gaming ignorantly, but for truly enlightened gaming you're going to need a little friendly help.

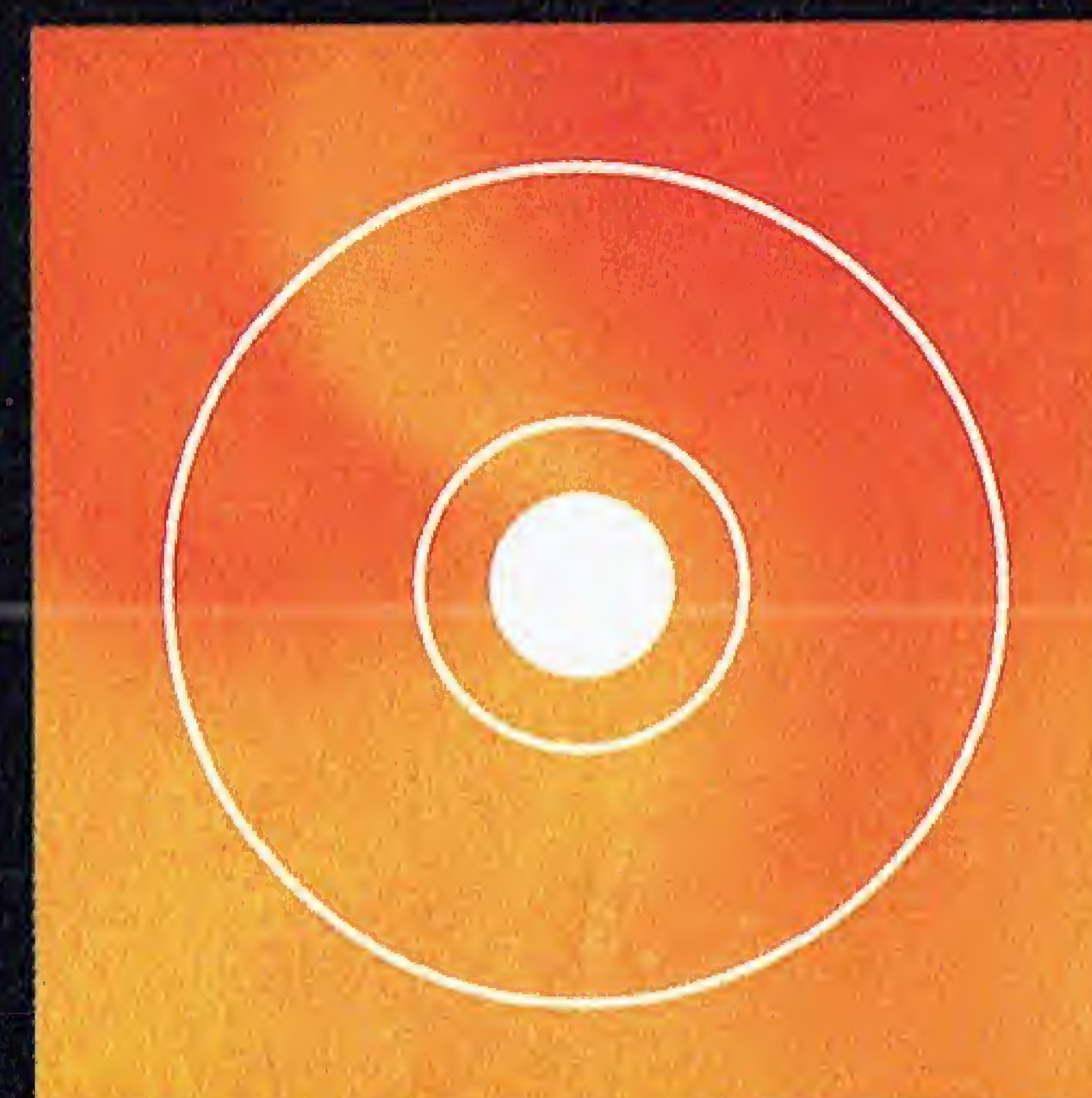
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PC PowerPlay. For games.



TIME COMMNADO

Secret Level

Enter COMMANDO at the password screen and you'll go to a boxing ring for a bit of a punch up.

Health Restore

At the pause screen, highlight Sound FX. Press X, Δ, Δ, O, X, Δ, Δ, O, □, □ X. Your health should then be full!

ASSAULT RIGS

Invincibility

Left, X, Left, X, Left, Left, X, Right, X, Right, X, X

All Items And Weapons

Left, Right, Left, Left, Right, Left, Right, Right, Up, Down, Up, Up, Down, Up, Down, Down

Level Codes

- 2: NEXTGEN - □, X, □, X, Δ, □
- 3: THISWAY - Δ, □, □, O, O, Δ
- 4: JOYJOY - Δ, □, Δ, Δ, O, Δ
- 5: NODDY - □, Δ, Δ, Δ, X, Δ
- 6: WASTELANDS - Δ, □, O, O, X, □
- 7: VERTIGO - X, □, □, □, O, Δ
- 8: GEMTOWER - Δ, □, X, □, Δ, Δ
- 9: BRIDGE - □, Δ, □, X, Δ, X
- 10: OBLITERATE - Δ, Δ, O, □, X, □
- 11: ARENA - Δ, Δ, X, Δ, O, Δ
- 12: PMB - O, □, Δ, Δ, Δ, O
- 13: RAMPS - Δ, □, O, X, Δ, □
- 14: OASIS - Δ, Δ, X, □, □, X
- 15: HALLS - O, X, Δ, Δ, Δ, Δ
- 16: COASTER - O, □, O, O, O, O
- 17: MINE - Δ, Δ, Δ, O, Δ, □
- 18: LOOK UP - □, O, □, X, □, Δ
- 19: DEADLINE - X, X, □, X, Δ, O
- 20: FORT - X, □, X, Δ, Δ, □
- 21: STAIRWAY - Δ, □, Δ, □, Δ, Δ
- 22: PARK A LOT □, □, Δ, O, □, Δ
- 23: ZAMCAM - O, X, X, X, X, Δ
- 24: SHOOT ME - Δ, □, □, Δ, Δ, Δ
- 25: WILD - Δ, O, Δ, Δ, O, □
- 26: OIL RIG - □, O, O, X, O, X
- 27: RIGHT WAY - X, O, □, Δ, Δ, □
- 28: WASTE TWO - □, O, □, □, □, □
- 29: DODGE - Δ, □, O, X, O, O
- 30: AIR - □, O, X, O, X, Δ
- 31: JUMP - C, □, X, Δ, C, Δ
- 32: ROOM 101 - Δ, □, X, O, □, X
- 33: FIREPOWER - X, X, Δ, X, X, S
- 34: WAVE - X, O, □, O, O, □
- 35: PUSH OFF - O, Δ, X, Δ, X, Δ
- 36: PERIMETER - X, Δ, Δ, X, X, □
- 37: SPIRAL - X, Δ, Δ, X, Δ, □
- 38: THE CASTLE - □, Δ, □, Δ, □, X
- 39: FORTRESS - Δ, X, Δ, X, X, Δ
- 40: LIFTS AHOY - Δ, X, Δ, O, □, X
- 41: PUSH ME - O, X, Δ, O, Δ, □

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 2

Play as Vermillion and Sho

Do the same trick (above) as to get Uranus and Master. Then, from the main menu, press O, R2, L1, X, L2, R1 on controller 2. The option selector should now be red. Then, select them from the Random Select Box as done above (don't forget that Select button!).

Remove Over Drive and Life bars. During play, press and hold the four attack buttons and press Select. This

will remove the continue, options and reset screen. Hit select again and the Life and Overdrive bars will disappear. To restore these, hit all attack buttons and Select again.

Play as Uranus and Master

From the main menu screen, press R1, L2, X, L1, R2, O on controller 1 as the options scroll in. If done right, a sound will chime and the selector will be blue. Choose the two by highlighting the Random Select Box from the Player Select screen. Hold down the Select button to slow down it enough to choose!

ROBOPIT

Arena Select

Hold down R1, R2, L1, L2 and hit select at the main menu screen to access the arena select area. Double digit numbers represent courses and single digits refer to the time of day.

Super Characters

From the Managers screen, select Custom Player. Then, enter these names:

1. Bruce McMillan
2. Bill McCormick
3. John Burk
4. Kevin Loh
5. Louise Read
6. Dennis Hirsch
7. Erik Kiss
8. Jon Spencer
9. Chris Johnson
10. Eric Pauker
11. Kevin Pickell
12. Mark Gipson
13. Mike Swanson
14. Geoff Coates
15. Edwin Gomes
16. Tony Lee
17. David Demorest
18. Craig Hui
19. Mike Sokyorka
20. Frank Faugno
21. Gary Lam
22. Brent Neilsen
23. Josh Holmes
24. John Rix
25. Jim Hughson
26. Duncan Magee
27. Keith Dundas

You can then edit the players skill level as much as you want!

ALIEN TRILOGY

Super Cheat

Enter 1G0TP1NK8C1DB00TSON at the password screen. This gives you all weapons, invincibility, unlimited firepower and all levels! Happy hunting!





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<http://hyperactive.com.au>

GAMES ONLINE

NOT THE NEXT ISSUE

We give up. Trying to predict the future in this industry of ever-changing release dates is too much, even for us. So instead of trying to hazard a guess at what might turn up in time for the next issue, we're going to give you something different to look at.

The next issue will, however, be available in July. Don't even think about missing it.



Production artwork from Soul Blade - Boasting some of the most detailed 3D graphics yet seen in a video game, Soul Blade's visuals are impressive, to say the least. But they had to start somewhere. This is one of the pre-production sketches of Sophitia drawn by Namco's talented artists.

play virgin

grid runner



March

Survival is simple. Never stop running. Scream through 57 rounds of blood-pumping, heart-pounding, mind-bending mazes in this sci-fi, cyber-speed chase to hunt down enemy flags. Cast a myriad of magical spells to thwart monster opponents like the menacing Minox or the Empress Vorga. If you've got the stamina and smarts, Grid Runner will keep you guessing, gaming and going for hours. A new 3D nightmare blindly addictive game.

- features**
- 57 massively challenging rounds.
 - 15 menacing, maniacal opponents
 - 2 player head-to-head action.
 - 28 independent two-player rounds.
 - Ability to perform different spells (teleporting and firing)

GRID RUNNER:

category	Arcade tag game
platform	PlayStation, Saturn, PC
rrp.	\$89.95
rating	G

Classic arcade action, direct from Japanese codeshop Taito. Bubble Bobble has been captivating crowds for nigh on 12 years. What actually makes Bubble Bobble 2 so attractive is pure gameplay, and plenty of it with a hint of strategy. Individual screens, each constituting a single level, are riddled with carefully structured ledges. To complete all 120 levels, the players must eliminate adversaries by blowing bubbles, capturing the enemies within, then popping the bubbles with spikes on their heads to dispose of their foes.

features

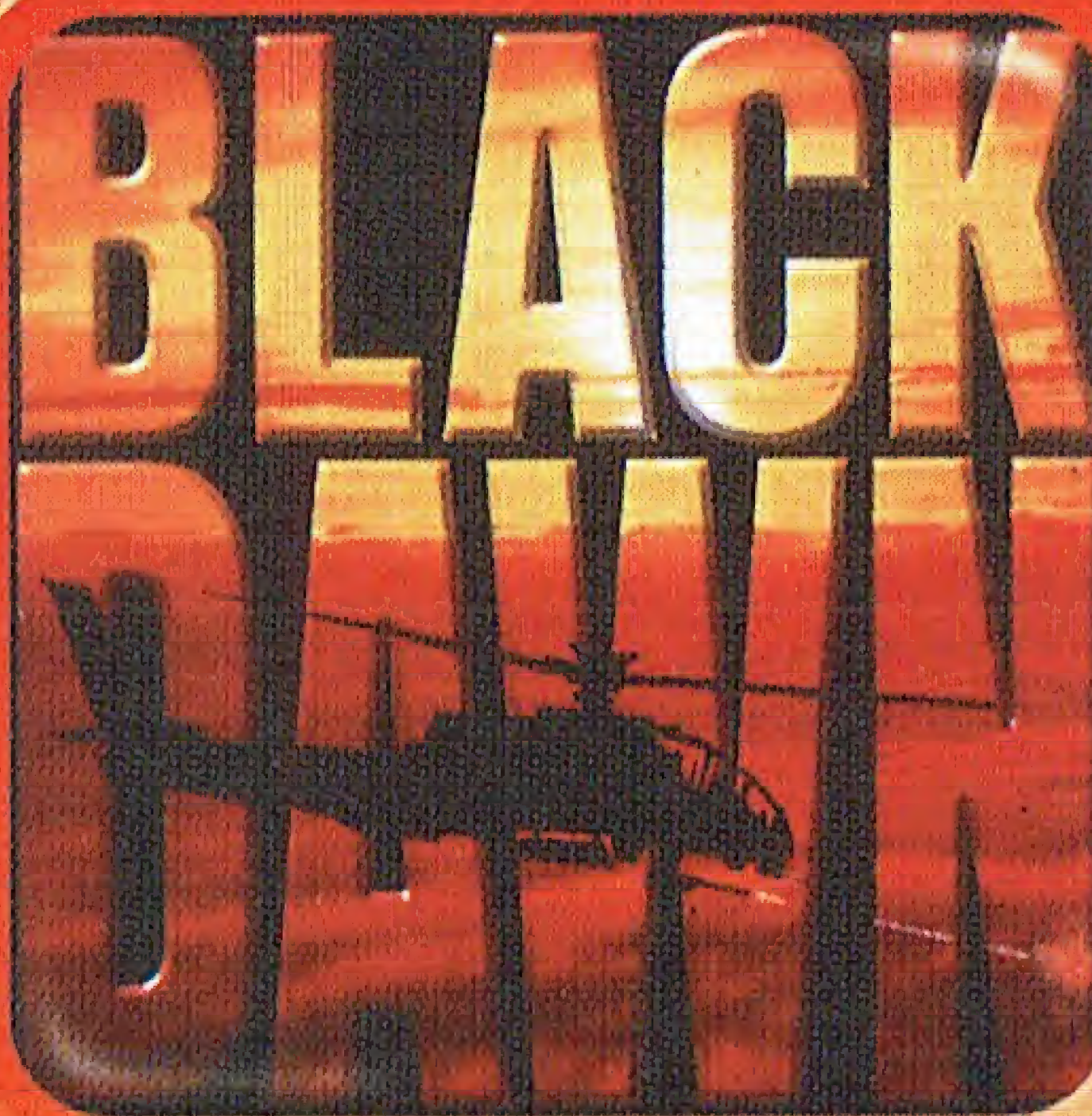
- 120 levels
- Plenty of bonuses and fireballs
- 10 customary bosses

BUBBLE BOBBLE 2

category	arcade
platform	PlayStation, Saturn
rrp.	\$89.95
rating	G



April



February

Terrorist activity is at an all time high. Efforts toward regional stability and peace are failing. A top secret Black Operations military group has been assembled. Your mission is to save innocent civilians and take over terrorist militia at any cost. You will attack, destroy, escort, rescue, defend and survive at any cost. Black Dawn delivers high arcade action to PlayStation and Sega Saturn owners.

features

- An advanced "on-the-fly" 3D environment for fast action; a high frame rate for silky smooth animation.
- Spectacular special effects including full 3D explosions with flying debris and shrapnel.
- The most control of any game in its genre.
- 360° of visual freedom.
- 32 high risk mission over eight different terrains.

BLACK DAWN

category	Helicopter Shoot 'em up
platform	PlayStation, Saturn
rrp.	\$79.95
rating	G8+ low level animated violence

Nano-robots are attacking the world. As the Nanotek Warrior, players must shoot their way through 8 successively Nanoscopic dimensions and ultimately defeat each huge boss to save the planet.

features

- Transparent smoke, texture mapping, gouraud shading, and high-end 3-D acceleration in a futuristic environment.
- Variety of ship movements, controls (jump banking, barrel roll, sprint, hyper-space and floating descent with power-ups) and weapons to choose from.
- Large variety of enemies with 360° of freedom, unique powers, animation and play mechanics.
- Tight, addictive gameplay with high replay value and responsive controls.

NANOTEK WARRIOR

category	Arcade Shoot 'em up
platform	PlayStation
rrp.	\$89.95
rating	G8+ low level animated violence



May



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PlayStation
The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine

SOUL BLADE ■ PUBLISHED BY NAMCO